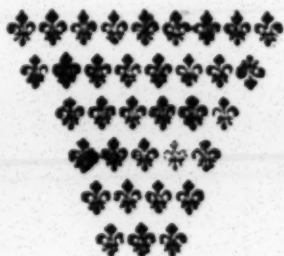


A
DISCOURSE
Concerning the
IMMORTALITY
OF THE
SOUL.



By *SAMUEL MATHER.*

L O N D O N: Printed by *R. Tookey* for *N. Hillier*, at the *Princes Arms* in *Leaden-Hall-street.* 1712.



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A
DISCOURSE

Concerning the IMMORTALITY
OF THE
Human Soul.

SOME Articles of the Christian Religion, are demonstrable by human Reason. The Existence of God, his Almighty Power, &c. are evidenc'd by the Works of Creation and Providence; other Truths have their Proofs from Divine Revelation. Of this Nature are the Articles
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that relate to the Resurrection of the dead, the future Judgment, the Eternity of the Torments of Hell, and the Perennity of the Blessedness of Heaven. These things receive their principal Proof from the *Holy Scripture*.

And in discoursing of them it is, first, requisite we shou'd be establish'd into the Belief, of the Divine Original of the *Bible*, and then we are to enquire what is affirmed therein, and accordingly form our Judgments of them. Whether the Immortality of the Soul, be demonstrable by Arguments fetch'd from the Light of Nature, in Contradistinction to the Holy Scriptures, I shall not now dispute; I write to them who do profess their Belief of the Divine Authority of the Sacred Volume. I shall insist on Arguments

guments drawn from thence, to prove that the reasonable Soul is immortal.

1. *The Souls of Men are Immortal, it may be prov'd from what the Scripture declares, concerning their being like to the holy Angels.*

The Existence of Immortal Spirits not lodg'd in Bodies, is so often asserted in Scripture, that a Man must either be prodigiously stupid, or deny the Truth of the Bible that shall call it in question. If it be objected, we do not know what a Spirit is it may be answered, we have an intuitive Knowledge of a Being, that Thinks, Rejoices, Sorrows, Doubts, Believes, Affirms and Denies, which is distinct from the Body. And no Man hath a clearer or more demonstrative Argument, for the Existence of his Body : Now this

thinking Substance is therefore said to be immortal, because it is like an Angel, a Being not clogg'd with a Body, which hath no inward Principle of Corruption, and which we call a Spirit, to distinguish it from a Substance that may be seen or felt, or that is liable to dissolution, *Psal. civ.*

4. Now the Souls of Men are like the Angels, *Luke xx. 36.* *neither Can they die any more, for they are equal to the Angels, &c.* If they are *equal* to the Angels they are immortal. If holy Men shall be equal to the Angels at the Resurrection, they must be immortal. As to their Existence in a separate State until the Resurrection, our Lord evidently proves it from the Existence of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* As to Wicked Men, their Souls are

are like the Devils, they shall never be annihilated, but they shall be tormented for ever, *Mat. xxv 45.* The Souls of *Good* and *Bad* shall remain in being for ever;

2. *Such things are affirm'd of the reasonable Soul, as do imply or suppose its Immortality.* The Subsistence of the Soul distinct from the Body is imply'd, 1 *Kin. xvii. 22.* *The Soul of the Child came into him again.* Consequently the Soul subsists when separate from the Body, independent thereof. And if the Soul continue thinking after its Separation, it is, in reason, to be esteemed immortal.

And that it does subsist in a separate State may be prov'd; our Lord declares the penitent Thief should be with him that Day in Paradise, *Luke xxiii. 42.*
where

where it is suppos'd, that the Soul of our Lord was to be that Day in Paradise, and that the Person to whom he spake, was to be with him. Christ's Body remained on Earth that, and several Days following; it must then be understood concerning his Soul which was to be in a separate State, where also the dying Penitent was admitted. The two distinct States of the Soul and Body, are pointed out to us, *Eccl. xii. 7. Then shall the Dust return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit to God who gave it.*

Solomon seems to allude to that History of the Creation of Man, whose Body was form'd of Dust, and into which God breathed an immortal Spirit, *Gen. ii. 7. the Body is Dust, and unto Dust it*
re-

returns again, *Gen.* iii. 19. but the Soul is made by the immediate Power of God, and to God it shall return again.

It was made by him immediately ; he hath this Title, the *Father of Spirits*, *Heb.* xii. 9. at Death they go to him. The Spirits of good Men come into his Hands, *Luke* xxiii. 46.

The Souls of wicked Men do subsist in a separate State after their Funerals, as well as theirs who are religious ; this is represented in the Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, *Luke.* xvi. 22. and following Verses.

3. *The Actings of the Soul may be produc'd as an Argument for its Immortality.*

It is capable of reflecting on its own Acts, and it discerns between

tween things which are proposed to Consideration; which it hath not ever been proved that Body or solid Matter may pretend unto.

The Soul is capable of being govern'd by a moral Law, and of being influenced by the Hopes of eternal Blessedness, as well as by Fear of everlasting Misery; And of understanding and enjoying God, whom to know is Life Eternal, *Joh. xvii. 3.* Besides if we consider the vast Desires that are in the Souls of Men, we may conclude them to be immortal, they are such as cannot be satisfied with any thing on this Earth, *Eccl. i. 8.* Now, to what Purpose are these Desires, if there were not a State hereafter wherein they may receive full Satisfaction? Would it not be a Blemish to the Infinite Wisdom of God

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posed. to make so noble a Creature in
 hath vain? And Man must be made in
 dy or vain, if there be no other Life
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 being which its unreasonable to sup-
 and pose. The Soul abides after this
 hopes present Life is finished ; it is Im-
 as by mortal. Take a View of Con-
 And science, or the Power which our
 oyng Souls have of reflecting on our
 life E- Actions, and Immortality will
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 may between *Moral Good and Evil*,
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and cause Amazement to siez upon them. The Fear of the Day of Judgment, made the *Roman* Governor tremble, *Acts* xxiv. 25.

4. *The Immortality of the Soul may be argued from the Redemption thereof.*

Were we no better than the Beasts that Perish, it cannot be supposed that *Jesus Christ* should have undertook our Redemption. The most valuable Price was paid for us, 1 *Pet* i. 18, 19. The Son of God hath reveal'd a most blessed *Immortality*, 2 *Tim.* i. 10. and the Redemption which he hath procur'd is *ETERNAL*, *Heb.* ix. 12 *Heb.* v. 9 This cou'd not be *Eternal*, if the Souls of the Redeemed were not immortal. The Scripture gives an Account of the Souls of them who suffer'd for their Adherence to the Christian

stian Faith, *Rev.* vi. 9, 10, 11. which proves their Existence in a separate State.

5. The Punishments threatned, and the Rewards promised in the Word of God, do shew that the Souls of Men are immortal.

In the Scripture there are threatenings of Everlasting Misery, which suppose the Soul to be immortal. The Torments of Hell are perpetual, *Mar.* xi. 48. and their Destruction is everlasting, *2 Thes.* i. 9. not that wicked Men shall be annihilated, but such Passages imply they shall be for ever to be miserable. This is utterly impossible, unless you grant the Soul immortal. Some Men are so unhappy as to have the Threatning of an Eternal Separation from God's Favour executed on them, whilst others are the happy Objects

jects of Divine Favour, to whom the Promise of *Life for Ever* is made, *Tit.. i. 2.* The Blessedness of Heaven, is described by its Everlasting Duration, *2 Pet. i. 11.* As long as God himself, who is over all blessed for evermore, shall exist, so long shall the Felicity of holy Men continue. As long as *Jesus Christ* shall live in Heaven, so long shall the Souls of them whom he hath redeemed, be happy in the Enjoyment of his Favour and Presence. Christ lives for ever, *Rev. i. 16.* and holy Men shall be for Ever with him, *1 Thes. iv. 17.* which proves the Immortality of the Soul.

6. *If we take a View of both good and evil Men, we may see just Reason to conclude the Reality of another and an Eternal State, and consequently of the Souls Immortality.*

The

The Events of Providence are so dark oftentimes, that no Knowledge either of Love or Hatred, can be collected from any thing that attends Men in this World, *Eccl. ix. 1, 2.* Now there being an eternal and unchangeable Difference between *moral good and evil*, between Vertue and Vice, it is but reasonable to conclude, that Persons who are conversant in the one, shou'd have a different Reward from what belongs to them who are addicted to the other.

And since, in this present Life, there is no such remarkable distinction made between *Good and Bad*, as that any Man should be absolutely determined Good on the account of *Prosperity* or *Bad* on the account of *Adversity*, that attends him, it follows there must be another World wherein all

B Things

Things shall be placed in a true light.

He who acted the part of a prophane and Atheistical Wretch shall have the Judgments which he merited executed upon him, whilst he who was truly Religious shall be Eternally happy in the enjoyment of Gods favour; neither of which can be, unless the Souls of Men be Immortal.

First, *As to Wicked Men, it must necessarily be concluded their Souls are Immortal, since they receive not a full punishment in this World for their wickedness.* That Wickedness deserves punishment is acknowledged by some wicked Men. This hath been one reason of their Atheism: They prosper and have no remarkable punishment following their Impieties, *Job xxi. 12, 13, 14.* The next world will
clear

clear the matter, where it will appear, that, notwithstanding wicked Men prospered for a Time, the just God was neither deaf nor blind. God is good to all Men; To some he manifests his goodness in this present Life, for others he reserves a future Blessedness. The prosperity of Vicious Men may be produced as a proof of another State, wherein their Triumphs shall be turned into Confusion. We have this illustrated in the Parable, wherein they who are Holy, are represented under all the disadvantages of present Calamity, and they who despise God and Goodness, do enjoy plenty and grandure, *Luke, XVI. 19. &c.* The future State will solve this Difficulty.

Secondly, *The Immortality of the Souls of Religious Men is to be concluded.*

cluded from the evils which they are exposed unto in this present Life. Evil is threatned against Wicked Men, and Blessedness is ingaged to the Pious, *Isaiah* III. x, xi. Holy Men do not, in this World, receive many Blessings which God hath promised. And since God is a God of truth, we judge the Soul Immortal, otherwise they who are Men of the best character for Holiness, Justice, Truth and Temperance, &c. Would be of all Persons the most miserable, *1 Cor.* xv. 19. If you consider holy Men either in a publick or private Station, you'll find that it is not consistent with the Goodness of God, to suffer them to have such Entertainment in this World as they generally have, if their Souls be not in Immortal. It is reasonable to allow that such as are like
 God

God in Holiness shou'd be his Favorites, if *Heirs of Favour*, they may rationally expect compleat Blessedness sooner or later; no such thing is to be enjoyed in this present World, on the contrary Affliction and and Sorrow befall the best of Men. The Apostle *Paul* was a Man who always aimed at the Glory of God, was always engag'd in some noble Design for the Honour of his Redeemer, and the Benefit of them with whom he had Converse: It might be thought such a Man should meet with kind Entertainment, and shou'd have continual Praise by those whose Welfare he endeavour'd. We see the contrary, his Life was full of uneasiness, he was exposed to poverty and Contempt, the two greatest Evils with which a generous Mind can

can be burthen'd. The whole Creation seem'd to be at War with him, *2 Cor. xi. 26.* how is this reconcileable with God's Goodness, unless we grant a future Eternal State: It is an invincible Argument to prove another World, where a full recompence shall be given. Nor is this the Case only of them who are Ministers of the Gospel, it is the common Lot of every true Christian to undergo Persecution in some Degree. *2 Tim. iii. 11, 12.* how shall we reconcile these things with the Goodness of God, unless we embrace the Belief of the Immortality of the Soul? This will solve all the Difficulties, and give life to the darkest Events of Divine Providence.

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T O T H E
R E A D E R.

I shall not refuse paying the ordinary respect, which a Man who publishes a Book owes to his Reader, of giving an Account of what may be expected in the performance ; You are, then, to know that my design is to do good to some who have not leisure to read or ability to purchase large Volumes of Commentaries on the Bible : Every Person in such circumstances who makes conscience of perusing some part of the Sacred Book daily,

A 2 deserves

To The Reader.

deserves to be encouraged by a
suitable Assistance.

I doubt not but that as others
have been, so this Treatise will
be looked on by a compassionate
sort of Readers, whose Pitty
extends it self to every one who
appears in Publick, imagin-
ing a weakness is betrayed, either
in the Subject which is chosen,
or in the method wherein the
Discourse is pursued, or in the
season of its Publication. Very
obliging Persons they are, and
if any such read this Preface
they may let the Book alone, it
is not printed with an intention
to occasion uneasyness.

Others complain of the mul-
tiplying Books of a Practicall
Nature, as a grievance. Their
objection

To the Reader.

objection is too Trivial to deserve a Reply.

If a Learned Man shall think fit to spend a part of his time in looking on this Tract, I do assure him, that I had not his Information in my View, but submit it to his censure. I could easily have enlarged on some Articles which gave me opportunity to have made an ostentation of Learning, but it would not have answered my purpose of being serviceable to Persons of that Character whose benefit I have attempted.

It's easy to discern that I have viewed several Writers who are not always quoted. My not mentioning their Names is, principally, owing to my Reader, whom

To the Reader.

whom I, almost all along, suppose unacquainted with the Learned Languages.

To do my self Justice, I add, that in the Passages which, to me, appeared most exceptionable, I have quoted mine Author. Hottinger's Ecclesiastical History, and Dr. Leusden's Philological Pieces gave me several of the Hints inserted in the Third Chapter.

I do but lightly touch on the Philology of the Scripture, because I am, happily, prevented from it, by a valuable Book of Mr. Henry Lukin's, intituled, An Introduction to the Scriptures. What I have written interferes very little with that Reverend Author.

To the Reader.

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my Reader's Happiness which
he ought not to envy. The pro-
sperity of all Essays in this kind
depends on the Blessing of God,
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C H A P. I.

How Divine Truths were first committed to Writing, and the Reason. Of the Holy Scriptures, and Inspiration. Remarks upon the Languages in which the Bible was written. How far the several Passages therein may claim Divine Original.

THAT Book commonly called the *Holy Bible*, containing the *Old Testament*, and the *New*, is received by Christians, with a Veneration which discovers they Believe it to be compiled by the Command, and under the special Direction of the Eternal Being. This is sufficient to excite an Enquiry into the Nature and Contents of a Volume which lays claim to an Excellency peculiar to it self.

§. 1. The Enquiry concerning the reason of Gods revealing his Mind and Will by Writing, seems requisite to be considered: as being serviceable to answer some Objections against the Method
 h which

which he takes to discover our Duty to us, because it's different from what was used to illuminate the first Ages.

Writing does by Visible Signs, communicate the Thoughts of Men to each other. The Man who first invented the Alphabet, hath so signally obliged the World, as to deserve an immortal Name: But he hath undergone the unhappiness to be forgotten, and consequently to be unknown to us, at the least under this Character. I am not ignorant, that some do with probability assign this Invention to *Moses*. Nor am I willing to detract in the least from that Man, concerning whom a Pagan Author did give this Testimony, *That he was a Person memorable for the Greatness of his Soul, and the Regularity of his Life*. Nevertheless, since it is no true Zeal for the Honour of another, to ascribe that which in reality belongs not to him, I own my self inclinable to be of the opinion of a Learned Man, who thinks that Writings were in the Church more Antient than those of *Moses*; his Argument is, that it is not likely, they of Old who enjoyed but few Revelations of Divine Things, should trust them only to Oral Tradition,

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Chap. I. *the Holy Scriptures.*

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Tradition, but they did rather consign them to Writing, for the better security against the Injuries they might in time suffer. According to this conjecture, *Moses* is to be looked on as a Collector of the several passages recorded in his Books, which fell out before his time.

Nor doth this in the least diminish the Divine Authority of his Books, since that he collected them, was by the special direction, and influence of the God of Heaven.

It would be an unworthy imagination to suppose, that the First *Fathers* of the Church (I do not mean them who lived some Ages since the Christian *Era*, but those who lived before, and soon after *Noah's* Flood) were such Enemies to each other as not to have solemn Assemblies, in which the History of the Original of the World, of the Fall of Man, and other signal events of Providence was considered. Now when God had called *Abraham*, and after him the *Israelitish* Nation into covenant, he was pleased to make more Glorious Discoveries of his perfections to them than to any other Person or People. And his Wisdom appeared in ordering that the principal Discoveries which had been made, should

be committed to Writing. They flatter Mankind at an extraordinary rate, who think that Divine Truths could have been sufficiently preserved if no Scripture had been composed. The History of the great Events recorded in the Bible, would long since have suffered so much by bold Additions, or careless Omissions, as that we should not have left unto us the Memory of the First real Truths thereof. Had the History of the Events of the Century wherein the Reformation from *Po-pery* began, been neglected, we should have lost the Knowledge of many particulars which now afford a grateful Entertainment: The Temper of the generality is to mind only the present, and the greatest Transactions of time past do little affect except to amuse them, whilst some of their leisure Hours lye heavy on them as an unsupportable Burthen.

And as to the Doctrines of Religion, it is not likely they should have escaped a treatment less ignominious than the Divine History; since, notwithstanding the Word of God hath been preserved in Writing from Age to Age, yet it is manifest that Multitudes of corrupt, and extravagant Tenents have been invented,

Chap. I. *the Holy Scriptures.*

5

ted, are fomented and defended with a Zeal beyond what is shewn on behalf of the Essential Articles of Religion. How should, a Man born in this Age, be able to discover the Way to Happiness which the Light of Nature shews him to be capable of enjoying, if he had not some settled and certain Rule to guide both his Faith and Practice? Every Man who pretends to a *By-opinion* lays claim to Truth, and whom to believe amongst the manifold Divisions that are too visible to be concealed, would be a Point of too great difficulty to be surmounted, were it not that the infallible Rule is contained in the *Bible*.

Nor can we think of a more convenient way of transmitting the Heavenly Doctrines from Age to Age, than this of Writing. The multitude of Copies which were soon taken of the Divine Writings after their complement, protected them from being capable of suffering any remarkable Injuries by succeeding Ages.

And we have found the Benefit of it : For the fictitious Gospels that early appeared in the Christian Church, passing under the Names of *the Disciples of Jesus*, of *Nicodemus*, and others.

soon condemned to the obscurity which overwhelms their Memory, who would have imposed them on the World.

§ 2. The Writings contained in the Bible do challenge a Divine Original in a way that is uncommon. The Light of Nature, or that Knowledge in the Minds of Men, which is deduced from the perception of External Objects, and from the Observation and Reflection which they make on their Ideas of things, descends from the Father of Lights : but it is different from the Knowledge which was bestowed on them who compiled the Bible. Inspiration is the Privilege they laid claim unto. They were immediately instructed by the great God, and by his appointment delivered those things which he made known unto them, for the advantage of the Heirs of Glory.

That God can immediately operate on the Minds of Men, is what must be owned as a Truth: for we may well enough suppose, that one Spirit can convey his Thoughts unto another. An Act of the Will is sufficient to communicate a Truth unto another Intelligent Being. Why may not a Power of conveying the Knowledge of a Matter, hitherto undiscovered

Chap. I. *the Holy Scriptures.*

7

to a Man, be allowed to an Angel, who is a Spirit not united to a Body, as well as such a Power of communicating things to another unbodied Mind? This Observation, if duely considered, will perhaps give some Assistance to our Thoughts, about the nature of that Inspiration which the Sacred Penmen of the Bible did enjoy.

It is possible for us to conceive, that God did by the immediate operation of his Holy Spirit bestow knowledge of Future Events, discover new Truths unto them, and yet not give them any new simple *Ideas* besides what they had before; and that they should express this Knowledge in Words intelligible to others, who pretend not to immediate Revelation.

Now, to secure them who were to hear these Divine Truths from the ill influence of Doubts and Scruples, they who laid the first Ground-works of Revelation on which their Successors were to build, and consonant to which they were to proceed, did appear with Credentials that carried along with them ungainstayable Proof of their Divine Original.

Moses appeared to the *Israelites*, and declared that he had a Commission from God to deliver them; he supported the Truth of his Assertion by the Miracles he wrought.

Jesus of Nazareth appeared on Earth, and justified his Being sent from Heaven, by the many Miracles that he effected. After him the Apostles clearly evidenced that they were imployed by the Eternal God, and that *Jesus of Nazareth* was the *Messiah*, that he was risen from the Dead, of which they were Witnesses, and they defended their own Truth, by the Miracles they wrought in the Name of *Jesus*.

The Sum of what hath been said is, God can inspire Men: That he did inspire some, the Persons who had the Heavenly Impressions did assert; That they to whom these Sacred Men did make known their Revelations, had reason to be satisfied with the Truth of them, the Miracles which they wrought may be produced as a plain Evidence: For it is contrary to reason to think, that God should set his Seal to any thing but Truth, and that he did thus testify, on behalf of the Prophets and Apostles, is beyond contradiction.

Chap. I. *the Holy Scriptures.*

§. 3. As to the Languages in which the inspired Penmen of the Bible wrote, some things may be offered which are worthy to be remarked.

The *Old Testament* was written chiefly in the *Hebrew* Language, I say chiefly, or for the greatest Part, since it's evident to them who understand the Oriental

Leus. Philol. Heb. Diss. 8. Tongues, that some Paragraphs of it are written in the *Chaldaic* Language, viz.

Jerem. 10. 11. that the *Jews* might readily answer those who would seduce them to Idolatry. Part of *Ezra*, from Chap. 4. ver. 8. to Chap. 6. ver. 19. is in the *Chaldee* Language, and the like is to be observed of some Chapters in *Daniel*. The Reasons of it, were partly because they lived in *Babylon*, and had learned that Language themselves, and because the *Jews*, for whose sake they wrote, were not acquainted

Vid. ch. 3. §. 5. with that Tongue, having in great measure lost their Na-

tional Speech by that Captivity. But beyond all this, another reason may be given, why God ordered it to be so, (viz.) to signify that Inspired Writings, and Divine Revelations, should hereafter be granted to the *Cumiles*,

which the Ages since Christ's time have seen accomplished. For Salvation is now no more confined within the *Jewish* Nation, than the Doctrine of it shut up in *Hebrew* Language, as it was for many Ages.

As to the *Hebrew*, we are to know, that it was the Tongue usually spoken by the *Israelites* for many Hundreds of Years, whilst they continued an intire Nation; the fewness of the Radical Words in that Tongue, and the peculiar agreeableness of the Words to the Things for which they stand as audible signs, seem to favour the Opinion of its being the *Original* Language. In what Territories, and for how many Ages this Language remained without alteration, is hard to determine, and Learned Men are not yet agreed, whether it were confined to one Family, or whether it did not obtain in *Syria* and *Canaan*. But, leaving that as being Foreign to the design of this Treatise, I would remark, that God was pleased to have greatest part of the *Old Testament* written in *Hebrew*, because it was the Idiom of those Persons whose benefit was principally aimed at when the Sacred Scriptures were composed. This Language, for many Ages after *Abraham's* time,

Chap. I. *the Holy Scriptures.* II

time, continued pure without degenerating ; and it's very probable, that no signal mutation passed in it amongst the *Israelites*, until the Captivity of the Ten Tribes, who were conquered by *Salmaneser* the *Assyrian* Emperor, of which we Read, *2 Kings* 17. After those unhappy Tribes had sinned themselves into Slavery, the Language remained amongst the *Jews*, who comprehend the Tribe of *Judah* and part of *Benjamin*, and the Posterity of them who removed into that Tribe upon the Apostacy of *Jeroboam*. I pass over making any comment on the opinion of the *Rabbins*, who held, that amongst other things for which the *Israelites* merited a deliverance out of *Egypt*, this was not the least considerable, they did not change their Holy Language in that Land of Slavery. The *Hebrew* being in a declining State in the *Chaldean* Captivity, it never recovered after that its Antient Empire again. But Custom, the alone Governess of Speech, introduced a mixed Language, partly *Chaldaic*, partly *Syriac*, and this was generally spoken by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, as may be proved from several Words which are recorded as uttered by him with an Interpretation annexed. The
Evangelist,

Evangelist, giving an History of a Miracle in raising a Dead Person, wrought by *Jesus of Nazareth*, interprets the very Words which our Blessed Lord spake, *Mark 5. 41. Talitha cumi*, which is, being interpreted, *Damsel arise*. The *Hebrew* being the Tongue generally spoken by the Church of God, the Almighty in his inspiring the Prophets of Old, directed them to utter their Visions in their Native Language. Which shews the Impiety and Folly of them, who would pretend to confine the Sacred Scripture to an unknown Tongue. An Error which the Pride of the *R. Church* hath betrayed them into.

The *Latin* Tongue was spoken at Court, and obtained generally through *Europe*, in the most celebrated Cities (at least) over which the *Roman* Empire extended its Dominion. And as it is a Note of Conquest for a Nation to loose its Rights of Legislature, and the Tenure of Possession, to to be robbed of its Language by a Foreign Invasion, is as memorable a Mark of Slavery, as any which have befallen the Nations who were compelled to yield to the *Roman* Puissance. And when the *Romish* Clergy had wheedled the *Emperors* out of their Rights

Rights, and the *Bishops* of *Rome* had assumed to themselves an universal Dominion over the Church, they resolved, against the Rules of common sense, to have the Scripture translated into no other Tongue but the Vulgar Latin, keeping also their *Liturgy* in the same Tongue, notwithstanding Millions, who are or have been of that Faction in *Europe* understand it not, and consequently offer up such sort of Devotions, as some, as many, of the modern *Jews*, who understand not the *Hebrem*, yet often run over their Prayers in that Tongue, believing (and certainly they have a Faith very much at command who believe) that such is its Power and Efficacy, that whether they understand the Words they utter or not, yet that God accepts more graciously their Supplications expressed in *Hebrem*, than if they were spoken in another Language which they understood.

§: 4 The Books of the Old Testament being chiefly written in *Hebrem*, were committed to the charge of the Jewish Church, in which were Men who took an especial care to preserve the Sacred Text from any Violations. So great was the veneration which the Jewish

Jewish Church had for the Inspired Volume, that they took an exact care to number the final and middle Consonants of the Words in the *Bible*, (*i.e.* in the Old Testament) and were extremely nice about the Vowels, and Accents, and in the end of each Book they put the number of its Verses : And they noted the middle Verse of the Book. Moreover, so exact were they, as to observe the several Verses in which the whole *Hebrew* Alphabet is contained. Such is the Nature of the *Masora*, such was the employment of some of their Criticks. And however they abominably corrupted the Worship of God, we do not find that our Saviour, or his Apostles, ever charged them with changing the Text. It is true our Lord did reprove their Folly in adhering to Traditions, yet he did not accuse them of having corrupted the Copies of the Old Testament, nor with having lost, through carelessness, or Wickedness, any of the Books of the Sacred Canon.

§. 5. When the *Persian* Empire yielded to the Success of the *Macedonian* Monarch, according to the Prophecy extant in the Eighth Chapter of *Daniel*, the
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time seems to have began when the *Grecian* Language was to be received as the universal Tongue amongst, at least, the more polite Nations over which the *Greek* Empire did extend it self. And about the Age in which our Saviour was born, that Language seems to have been commonly understood by the Subjects of the *Roman* Empire, which had vanquished all competitors for the universal Dominion. But tho' the *Greeks* had carried their Conquests, and their Language very far into Remote Countries, (before they yielded to the *Romans*) yet they reserved to themselves the most polite Learning: For to them Foreigners came for Education, and among them Philosophy flourished, and from *Athens* Strangers carried back a *Grecian* Air in their Behaviour, and a remembrance of a Language which, perhaps, hath a delicacy in it, not easily to be imitated by any other.

The most celebrated Authors wrote in *Greek*: Such of them as travelled into Foreign Lands, gathered what Monuments of Learning they afforded, and then returned home, and gave them to their Countrymen in their own Language, together with the improvements which had been

been made by themselves. For this reason the learning this Language became no small part of the Accomplishments of a Man of Breeding.

The Wisdom of God appears in directing the inspired Men, who compiled the New Testament, to write in the *Greek* Language. It had so much obtained in the World, that *Ptolomy* King of *Egypt* procured the Translation of the *Pentateuch*, or Five Books of *Moses* into *Greek*, that he might not want a singular Ornament to a Library that he had Erected. The Original Copy of which Translation was burnt by *Julius Caesar's* Souldiers, when they consumed that Noble Library in the Fire which destroyed *Alexandria*. Whether the Seventy Interpreters (concerning whom many doubtful things are reported) did translate more than the Books of *Moses*, is justly questioned by some Learned Men, yet it's granted, that the Old Testament was rendred into *Greek* before our *Saviour's* time, and commonly used by the *Jews*, who, many of them understood that Language better than the *Hebrew*.

I do, in compliance with common Custom, call the Holy Scriptures which were written before *Christ's* time, the *Old Testament*;

stament; And hope, if any Learned Man shall take the pains to read this Tract, (which is designed principally for the assistance of them who know no other Language than the English which they were taught in their Infancy) he will excuse my complying with common usage, since I acknowledge that a *Testament* properly signifies a disposition of Things, either by Contract, or Will, and that it is to be understood of the ordering of Things by Will, when applyed to the Writings of the *Evangelists* and *Apostles*. A Will is not of Force until the Death of the Person who makes it, and consequently since the *Messiah* died, not till after all the Writings of the *Law*, *Propheets*, and *Hagiography* were finished, that part of our Bibles contained in the Books beginning at *Genesis* and ending with *Malachi*, could not properly be called a *Testament*. But the term *Testament* in a more strict acceptation, belongs to the Writings which begin with *Matthem*, and end with the *Revelations*. Nevertheless, since the Title of our Bibles (I mean the *English Translation*) runs thus, *The Holy Bible containing the Old Testament and the New*, and this hath obtained of a long time in the Church, it would argue

gue a Man to be much at leisure if he should rack his Invention to find a fault with it ; especially, considering that even that part of the Bible which commonly is called the *Old Testament*, may in some respect lay claim to such a denomination, as being a Revelation of the Will of God made known by the Holy Spirit, who is called the Spirit of Christ (1 *Pet.* 1. 11.) to instruct Men in the Faith of him who is the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World. This part of Sacred Scripture (the *New Testament*) being written in the *Greek* Tongue, not by those who were born *Grecians*, but *Jews*, we are not to wonder if in it we find several *Hebraisms*, or ways of speaking common in the *Hebrew* Language. They wrote *Greek* in their own Style, and their Books being partly Quotations out of the Inspired *Hebrew* Authors, the *Genius* of that Ancient Language transmitted it self into their Writings. Which is so far from being any diminution of the Style, that it rather argues their Wisdom, inasmuch as they used the Phrases that were most pertinent to express the sense of the Ancient Oracles, which possibly could not so well have been unfolded had they confined themselves to no other

Forms

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Forms of Speech than what were properly *Grecian*, notwithstanding that Language is celebrated for its copiousness.

This discovers the Advantage of Skill in the Oriental Languages, in them who pretend to explain the Scriptures: For without a Man be adorned with it in some measure, he will not be able to avoid being led into sundry Absurdities, and false Glosses, from which the understanding the *Rhetorick*, or *Logic* of *Greece*, will not afford protection. The celebrated *BOCHART* once said, that *Avicenna* an *Arabian* Author, was the best Commentator on the *Old Testament*, meaning that by his reading that Writer, he was helped to understand the *Idiotisms* of the *Eastern* Languages. And it's observable, that the *Oriental* Nations have been more strict in preserving not only their Customs but their Phrases, than the *Europeans*: And since the Scriptures were written by *Israelites*, the *Spirit* Inspiring them suitably to their natural Temperament, and directing them to Words, and Phrases they were acquainted with; it's not to be thought, that Men should now be able to penetrate into the sense of the Sacred Volumes who are utter Strangers to Jewish Learning. This seems to be
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the reason why Men, conversant in *Rabbinical* Authors, have been most happy in their explaining difficult Texts of Scriptures, which would have puzzled *Plato*, or *Aristotle*, or the celebrated *Roman* Wit *M. Tully*, had they been asked to make a Commentary thereon.

§. 6. In these Languages, as hath been said, it pleased God to make known the Heavenly Truths, that are not to be discovered by the Light of Nature.

The Bible challenging an excellency that no other Book may pretend unto, viz. *Divine Inspiration*, it may be proposed, as a difficulty, which deserves consideration, whether every Sentence in the *Bible* is to be looked on as of Divine Original, or spoken by Inspiration. The reason of the doubt is, because in several Paragraphs of the Scripture, Wicked Men, nay sometimes Devils, are represented speaking things, which are left on record, that are of an Evil Nature. We find in the History of *David's* Life, an instance to this purpose, *2 Sam. 19. 7. Joab*, to recover him out of an impolitick mourning for his Rebellious Son, Swears in a Prophane manner, that not one of *David's* Servants would

would tarry with him, if he did not go out and speak comfortably to them. A Man must be extreamly complaisant to *Joab* who would say, that he was Inspired when he uttered himself with such a Military Fury. Again, we may sometimes read what was spoken by Evil Spirits, as in *Job, Chap. 1.* But though we hold the Books, both of *Samuel* and *Job*, were written under the guidance of the *Holy Spirit*, yet we are not to think that He did influence either *Joab* in the aforementioned Speech, or the Devil in the lying Accusation he drew up against that Man whom the Eternal Judge pronounced incomparable.

But the true notion of the Bibles being of Divine Original is, That not so much as one sentence is to be found in it which was not inserted by the special direction of the *Holy Spirit*.

Notwithstanding (that I may keep to the above-mentioned Instances) *Joab* was not inspired when he spake these words, yet he who wrote the Second Book of *Samuel*, was under the special Guidance of the *Holy Ghost*, when he compiled that Book, and when he wrote that particular History of *David*. And it was by the same direction that the Author of
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that Book did insert what *Joab* spake to *David*. I know precisely to determine how far the Authority of every particular Precept in the Scripture doth remain is difficult, and requires some Knowledge in the Customs of the *Asiatic* Nations. How far Scripture Examples are binding may be considered in the following part of this Discourse. but at present the inquiry is, how far any passage that we read in the Bible doth at this time oblige them to Obedience, who are Worshipers of that God who inspired the Compilers of this Volume.

The clearing of this Enquiry is profitable, as being the way to secure us from Error in several regards. I would recommend these distinctions and remarks concerning Inspiration.

Inspiration is either as to Doctrine, or Precept, or Matter of Fact, or Prophecy. These are several Branches of the Divine Operations, and with their explication shall offer something concerning the Authority they have to demand Obedience, and Subjection.

First, As to Inspiration which respects the Doctrines of Religion, we are to look on all Doctrinals, which are revealed in the
Word

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Word of God as from him, to be true, and to yield to them a firm Assent. Some Doctrines of the Scripture are self-evident Propositions, others appear upon the Reasons that by the Light of Nature prove their Truth, but some depend entirely on Divine Revelation, and are for this Reason to be embraced in our Belief, because the God of Truth hath declared them in his Word, which cannot deceive. Of this sort, are the Doctrines of the Trinity, of the Resurrection of the Dead, of Justification by Christ's Righteousness imputed. For I presume none of these *Articles* of the Creed can be demonstrated by the Light of Nature. I know, among the Heathen, some obscure Hints have been given concerning the Trinity, which have not proceeded from the reflection they have made on their *Ideas*, which they found lodged in their Minds, by the ordinary way whereby human understanding is furnished with its Materials, but they received them by Tradition. The like is to be remarked concerning the Resurrection of the Dead, which was a Doctrine scoot at by the *Pagans* in the Primitive Times of Christianity. And no dispute is to be made about the Doctrine of Salvation

vation by Christ, of Justification by his Righteousness imputed, but that it is wholly owing to Divine Revelation; for none of the unenlightened part of the World knew of it, and even many who have the Scriptures are not brought to receive it, as an Article of their Faith necessary to Salvation. Now these things being laid down in the Word of God, are therefore to be believed because declared by him whose **Truth** is invariable.

Secondly, Inspiration as to Precept carries Authority along with it that is universal, tho' not always perpetual. Divine Precepts were given at first by immediate Revelation, such as the Ten Commandments, and the Ceremonial Law, and such also were the Judicial Laws of the *Israelites*, which were peculiar to them, and are not binding among other Nations. When I say Divine Precepts were at first given by Inspiration, I intend that God did immediately reveal them, and from hence were the Laws of Mankind deduced. Tradition conveyed from Age to Age the Precepts which inspired Men, in the first Times after the Flood, gave out to direct Men, which, also, they themselves received, not from any deductions of Reason, but immediately from God
Almighty

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Almighty. For, that any Men never instructed in the Nature of Practical Truths, should by their own Reason find out the Precepts that require Religion towards God, and Justice, Charity towards others, and Temperance, and Sobriety as to themselves is not to be granted, since amongst some of the most Polished Heathens Theft was allowed, and some of their most Virtuous Men would discover they were of the Posterity of *Noah* who soon after the Flood was scandalously intoxicated, Or Antient *Cato's* Virtue is disadvantageously represented by the *Lyric Poet*, who believed the Tradition.

*Narratur & princeps Catonis
Sæpe mero caluisse virtus.*

However, some endeavour to palliate his Custom.

Now, whatever Precepts came from God are binding univertally, some are perpetual, and others only for a time: Some Precepts are of an unchangeable Nature, such as the First Commandment, which requires love to God with all our Hearts, &c. Some are of such a sort that we cannot conceive of a reasonable Being,

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standing in such a relation, but we must grant, that it is fitting he should be under obligation to perform such and such things. Of this sort all Precepts that are Moral may be accounted : which are therefore commanded because they have in themselves a Native Goodness.

Whereas some are only of a temporary Obligation, and are styled positive Precepts: They are in themselves, antecedent to the Divine Command, indifferent, but being once commanded do oblige the Conscience as long as the reason of the Precept does abide.

Under these, I think may be comprehended, not only the Ceremonial Laws of *Moses*, which were Typical of the Gospel-dispensation under the *Messiah*, but also the prohibition of the Apostles (or rather first Christian Council) in 15. Chap. of the *Acts*, relating to the eating Blood, the reason of both ceasing they are no longer binding.

Of this sort also are the *Judicial Laws* that respected the *Israelites* as a Nation, who held their Title to the Land of *Canaan*, by a special Grant from the Ruler and Lord of the whole Earth. Usury was forbidden amongst themselves, which yet was not in its self a Moral Evil, like
Stealing,

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Stealing, and Murder, for it was allowed to be used to Strangers. I mention not that Precept, *Jam. 5. 14. Of Anointing the Sick*, as supposing the meaning to be that, when they called for their Ministers to pray with the Sick, they should use Means for their Recovery; Oyl being of a Medicinal Nature, and of great use in those Countries, And other commands respected them as they were Inhabitants of *Asia*, which, with no colourable Reason, can be urged, for their obliging them who in *Europe* worship that God who chose *Israel* of old to be his peculiar People.

Thirdly, Inspiration was sometimes of Matter of Fact: By which I intend, the special direction which was given to the Sacred Penmen of the Scripture, to record historical Passages. Of this kind were the Histories of past Ages, which *Moses* and the Collector of the Books of *Chronicles* have transmitted to Posterity. And under this, the Book of *Judges* in the Old Testament, and of the *Acts of the Apostles* in the New, as well as other Historical Tracts in the Bible, are to be reckoned. Now of these we are to observe, that Matter of Fact related in them does not oblige us to imitate what we find recor-

ded of others : but we are to believe the Truth of the Narratives. *Deborah's* Song is recorded, but some Passages in it can hardly be drawn into Practice. In the Acts of the Apostles we have the History of the Lyes of *Annanias* and *Sapphira*, which we are no more to judge allowable to us to imitate, then we can believe that *Pontius Pilate* was a Christian because his name is mentioned in the Apostles Creed, or in that form of Confession of Faith which bears that Title.

FINALLY, Inspiration as to Prophecie is also to be considered as one of the Discoveries of the Divine Mind. This relates to things that were Future, at the time when the Inspiration was given. A Prophecie differs from an History, in its having a constant reference to things to come, whereas an History is a narration of what in time foregoing, hath been transacted.

We are obliged to yield our Assent to the Truth of all Scripture Prophecie, as far as we understand it, because it proceeded from the God of Truth, who neither can be deceived, nor will deceive. These Prophecies, relating to the coming of the *Messiah*, recorded in the Old Testament, have been exactly fulfilled in

Jesus

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23

Jesus of Nazareth, whose Birth at *Bethlehem*, whose Sufferings, Death, Resurrection were plainly foretold, and are to be believed as Articles of Faith necessary to Salvation, *Rom. 10. 9.* As to the Prophecies recorded in the *Revelations*, we are also to credit them according to the Light we have as to their Accomplishment : I suppose *Calvin* may be excused altho he said these Words of the Author (*Se penitus ignorare quid velit tam obscurus scriptor*) That he knew not what to make of so dark a Writer : Since Cardinal *Cajetane* said of the Book it self (*Exponat cui concesserit Deus*) let the Man explain it to whom God hath given ability. It is to be thought that he looked on himself as unfit for such an undertaking. That I may close this Head, Two Things are to be recommended ; First whatsoever Rules are contained in the Ten Commandments of a Moral Nature, are of a perpetual obligation. And Secondly whatever is prayed for in the Lords Prayer we are under an Obligation to endeavour that it may be accomplished, as far as we are capable, in the Station in which we are fixed by Divine Providence.

I shall finish this Chapter with the Pious

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wish of that Excellent Poet; *Herbert*, in his Poem of the Scriptures,

*Oh that I knew how all thy Lights combine,
And the Configurations of their Glory:
Seeing not only how each Verse doth shine,
but all the Constellations of the Story.*

C H A P. II.

The Scriptures, considered in the Historical Part, are useful, as containing Instructions and Consolations. The History of the Fall, of Judgments executed on Wicked Men, of Protections shewn to the Church of God, and of particular Persons is of an Instructive Nature.

IF a Survey be made of the Bible, a large Part of it will be found Historical. The pleasure which Men take in History may invite them, who are at leisure to make reflections on the Conduct of others, to a serious view of these Inspired Writings. History records not
only

only the Actions of Men, but the Events which attend Persons, and Nations : And whether the Prosperity of others, or the terrible Things which have befallen them, do raise delight, we shall read the Scriptures very carelessly, if we do not observe Events, in both Kinds, as memorable as ever have been Required by any Historian or Annalist.

It is not a partiality shewn to the Religion we profess, if we do assert that the Bible exceeds all other Books, in giving an Account of the great changes (that are of importance to be known) which have befallen the Humane Race: And the Passages recorded concerning particular Persons are so instructive, as to leave Men without excuse, if they avoid not the Wickedness, which they behold punished in others, and refuse to imitate the Holyness which others have found highly approved in the sight of the Eternal Majesty.

§. 1. *The History of the Apostasy of Adam, and in him, of the Humane Race, however it be a matter that carries Grief along with it, yet is not without a profitableness unto those, who will when they read be at the pains to make reflection.*

Some who have been infatuated with a Philosophical *Enthusiasme*, turn the History recorded in the Three First Chapters of *Genesis* into Allegory. And a modern Author hath taken the pains to ridicule the Account *Moses* gives of the Fall with a degree of Prophaness rarely to be found in a Man not altogether an Atheist. It is beside my present Purpose to detect the Folly of such an Attempt, but shall endeavour to consider what useful Instructions may be deduced from this History.

I would premise that all the Humane Race were federally in *Adam*, and that had he persevered, the time allotted him for his Tryal, they would have been born innocent, and lived happily. But he sinned by Eating the forbidden Fruit, and in him all his Posterity, *Rom. 5. 12.*

Now this will afford several Remarks which may be profitable, when we read that Portion of Scripture that Registers our Revolt from that God who is to be adored as our Creator.

[1.] It is easie to observe that the Devil, who tempted our First Parents, wants neither Falshood, nor Subtilty to carry on his Designs.

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His Designs are Mischief and Ruin. Whether Pride in scorning to attend Man as his Guardians was the First Sin of Apostate Angels, is what I freely profess my self not to know, nor do I reckon it any disgrace to be ignorant, in such Matters as are purely of Revelation, which are but darkly delivered in the Scriptures, whose design is not to gratify the curiosity of them who love speculation more than practice. The Devil, though an haughty Spirit, made his Pride yield to his Malice when he concealed himself in the Serpent. And he who was an Angel of Light could vilify himself, in the most abject manner imaginable, to seduce innocent Man into a Transgression of the Law of the God of Holiness. The same Tempter can, when it will appear suitable to carry on his Hellish Purposes, de-vest himself of Magnificence, as Prince of the Powers of the Air, and cloath himself in a Shape most despicable.

How much of Subtilty did he shew in assailing *Eve* rather than *Adam*? And what could move him to such an abominable Attempt, but that Malice which took place in him upon his forsaking Heaven, and that seems to be the principal Delight to which he hath abandoned himself?

[2] *This History of the Fall does also carry along with it deplorable Evidence of the Frailty of Man, and that even at his best Estate. Man was made upright, but he retained not his Integrity, possibly many Hours, for some think that Adam fell the very First Day wherein he was Created. And to justify their Opinion, they do translate Psalm 49. 12. Nevertheless Adam abode not one Night in Honour, he resembles the Beasts that perish.*

The frailty of Man was evidently seen in his forsaking God. He had an Integrity, he enjoyed the Delights of Paradise, he had a threatening annexed to the Divine prohibition, yet he changed, hearkning to the solicitations that were proposed to seduce him into Ruin.

Now tho' we cannot conceive any Creature of whom a capableness of change may not be affirmed, yet we are not to charge the fault of the Apostasie upon this which is the proper Notion of Mutability. It is impossible that any Being, except only the Glorious God, should be absolutely unchangeable. The Angels, who to this Hour retain their Glory, are not in themselves, absolutely unchangeable, for then they would cease to be Creatures; but they are so fixed, by the
decree

decree of God, that they remain Everlastingly unchanged in the Enjoyment of God, and they know this will be their condition for evermore.

It was no disgrace to make a reasonable Being who should have a natural Capacity of Understanding a Temptation, and of receiving, or rejecting it when offered. Nor can it be accounted any Imperfection in the Creation, that God should frame such a Creature. For how a reasonable Being should be made, and yet be altogether incapable of change is unintelligible. But it may instruct us in an humble Opinion of our selves, since at our best Estate, this is to be remarked of us, that we are changeable.

[3] *It informs us also that Sin is a formidable Evil ; since it was punished in such a remarkable Manner.* Wicked Men make a mock at Sin, thro' their Ignorance of the great Evil that adheres to it, and with which it is followed. The Evil of Punishment succeeded *Adam's Sin*. Nor may we find fault with the Supreme Judge for condemning Man to Death, and to an expulsion out of Paradise and to a Laborious Life on Earth, mixed with Vexations, since the Sin that *Adam* was guilty of, did merit no less a Punishment.

It was an Offence against the *Eternal Majesty* who is Infinitely above the most Glorious Angel in Heaven, whose Perfections cannot be described, and whose Glory is unconceivable. *Adam* sinned against that God who was his Creator, and whom he owed the greatest Homage and most strict fidelity unto; against that God who had been a God of Bounty, who had showered the Blessings of this World upon him, who had made him Lord of the Earth, who had given him enough to content him, had he been wise to have seen his own Interest.

Besides in that sin of *Adam* several Evils are to be remarked. Pride was discovered in it, since it proceeded from an affectation to be as Gods.

He was not satisfied with being in that Rank, the Sovereign of Heaven had seen fit to have him placed. And scandalous Ingratitude was to be charged on him, for his making such an unbecoming return to his Almighty Benefactor. What prodigious Folly was it to side with the Devil, in his Treason against the King Eternal, Immortal, and the only wise God? And in that Act of Disobedience, he was knowingly guilty of self-murder; the Unbelief that appeared in his
not

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not crediting the God of Heaven is no excuse for his fool-hardiness. He could not but know that God was a God of Truth, as well as Power, and Goodness. He was as much to be charged with Self-Murder notwithstanding he might presume that he should escape Ruine, as that Man who runs upon a Swords Point, with a vain Imagination of his being impenetrable. Besides the Robbery which he committed in invading that which he had no right unto, an unaccountable discontent with the State wherein Divine Wisdom seated him did discover its self. He would fain be somewhat beyond what he was, and tho' he could have no reason to complain of his Station, yet was restless in the midst of his Enjoyments, which might have supplied his Wants, and satiated his just Desires. A folly which he hath bequeathed his Posterity, who torment themselves with vain Desires, and needless Fears, because they are unwilling that God, who doth all things well, should rule the World, and order things for them as he sees fitting. Nor will they gain any thing better by their discontent than did their sinful first Father, whose Crime had so much of Evil in it as to merit a Banishment from Paradise, and
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the undergoing the other Calamities that ensued.

[4.] *The terribleness of the Punishment doth give occasion to consider and adore the Justice of God.* We may give sufficient reasons to clear the supream Judge from any Injury done to the Transgressor. An attention to what may be said, will afford right apprehensions to us, in this matter, unless we are resolved not to be satisfied with the most exact Justice.

It was but reasonable that Man should be under a Law. He was created an Understanding being, capable of choosing Good, and refusing Evil and consequently fit to be subjected to a Moral Government. The granting this, like the yielding of a self-evident Proposition in *Geometry*, carries with it ungainstayable Evidence of the reasonableness of what follows. And I never met with a Man who was so far abandoned of reason as to deny the truth of this Position. It was but reasonable that this Law should be supported by a sanction, i. e. have a promise annexed to it to engage Obedience, and a threatening, to keep a Guard, that an infraction of the Precept might be prevented. It was but fair that some Tryal should be made of Man's Obedience.

It was no reproach to God's Providence that *Abrams* Faith was tryed by a command to offer up *Isaac*, which was a greater Tryal than *Adam* had, for his was only the forbearing the Fruit of one Tree, when he was surrounded with a vast Number of others. The prohibition which was the Tryal of *Adam's* Obedience was no more than what he was able to have observed. He could not pretend that he was forced to eat whether he would or not.

But the next cause of his Sin is to be sought in himself. He suffered himself to be deceived by the Devil, at whose persuasion, freely, out of choice he rebelled against God. He fell neither as Innocent, nor as Corrupted, but having entertained a Falshood in his Mind he actually defiled himself. Had God required something above his Strength, or delivered the prohibition in ambiguous Terms, some excuse could then have been pretended, whereas now his Destruction is to be laid on himself. In a word, *Adam* wanted nothing to encourage him to Obedience, he had personal Blessings, was seated in a *Paradise*, had reason to think that his Almighty Maker, who bestowed such signal Blessings on him at first Creation, would

would not have been slow in rewarding his sinless Obedience with yet greater, and more valuable Favours.

Some think that God did fully execute the Sentence, as to the very time limited in the Threatning (*viz.*) on the Day wherein *Adam* did eat the Forbidden Fruit; understanding by a Day a Thousand Years, which the Apostle (2 *Peter* 3. 8.) affirms to be with the Lord as one Day: According to which Interpretation *Adam* was not to live a full Thousand Years. And we have seen that neither he, nor any of his Posterity have abode so long on Earth: It being the Privilege of the second *Adam* our Glorious *REDEEMER* to abide a Thousand Years, with those whom he has recovered out of the lost Race, on Earth during that time which at the restitution of all things shall commence.

§ 2. *The History of several Judgments, which God hath in his Providence, executed on Sinners, is many Ways instructive.* The Providence of God is Vocal in all Things with which Men are entertained. When we consider the Events that attend others we should be careful not to make spiteful Inferences from the Providence of
God

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God. We are not to say concerning a Man, because under Calamity, that he is a Sinner above others; But from the Sins which he commits we may be able to justify the Providence that seems, at first appearance, severe. When a Criminal hath the very Judgment executed on him which was threatned to his Crime, we may, without fear of transgressing the Law of Charity, say he is punished for his Wickedness.

But yet in some Cases the Sovereignty of God is to be adored. And it's our business rather to reverence, than pass a Censure on what the supreme *Arbiter* of Heaven Effects. Thus in the case of *Job*, it would have been Egregious uncharitableness to have censured him for an Hypocrite, or for one of an unbecoming Conduct, because of the *unparelled* Calamities that were his allotment. Having put in this caution, I proceed to consider what Instructions may be gathered from Judgments executed on Offenders, which we find recorded in Scripture.

[1.] *The Execution of Judgment on the Apostate Angels carries in it Instruction, and is capable of having a good improvement made of it by Mankind.*

That

That God made Angels Holy, is beyond controverſie with them who, according to the Account the Scripture gives of the Works of Creation, do believe that all things were made good. Heaven was the Habitation of thoſe Immortal Spirits. Some of them left thoſe Bleſſed Abodes (*Jude v. 6.*) and upon their Apoſtaſie from God vengeance overtook them.

It's a Queſtion whether they ever were in the Higheſt Heavens in which the Beatiſic Viſion is enjoyed. Probably *that Bleſſed View* would have ſo determined them in Holy Reſolutions as to have prevented their ſinning.

Theſe Angels, whoſe number was very great, which rebelled againſt God, were expelled from the lofty Manſions wherein they were at the firſt diſpoſed, and are under a Sentence of *Damnation* which is not yet executed on them, to the uttermoſt: That being reſerved until the Day of Judgment. 2. *Peter* 2. 4.

The Scripture gives not ſo full an Account of them, and their Apoſtacy, and Miſery, as it doth of what hath befallen the Humane Race, becauſe it was written more immediately for our Good, and conſequently, thoſe things, which do
ſerve

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serve to inform us of our evil State, and of the Redemption which is procured, are more profitable than a large description of the woful state of the Devils.

It affords matter for deep speculation, and care is to be taken that we do not fall into Enthusiastical Conceptions, and rather darken the History of their Fall by Words without Knowledge than entertain Thoughts exact, and true, concerning that awful dispensation.

Upon the view of the condition which the Devils are in we shall find such Instructions as these.

That we ought to be careful lest we sin against God with a presumption of an escape from Justice. Doth not the misery of the Damned Spirits plainly proclaim this awful Truth, that the Dignity of any Being cannot secure an Offender from the Divine Indignation? And can any Mortal pretend to escape, or be so vain as to contend with the Almighty? Did the Powers, Dominions, Principalities, Angels, Archangels, that took up Arms against God succeed in their Impiety? Or rather does not the prodigious Ruine which fell upon them declare that none can contend with the Eternal God, nor avoid Destruction, if they do
like

like Devils continue impenitent? And what occasion have we to reflect, with wonder, and amazement, upon the Mercy of God to the Apostate Race of Man, inasmuch as a Redeemer was provided for them, and not for the fallen Angels? *Heb. 2. 16.*

God did not spare one of the Apostate Spirits, that are under the Conduct of the Prince of the Power of the Air, and yet how many Thousands of Mankind have been, and are the Objects of Divine Mercy? It should teach us thankfulness to the Great God whose Sovereignty hath appeared so much to our Advantage.

[2.] *We may draw very profitable Instructions from the Histories of the Judgments executed on Wicked Men, recorded in the Holy Scriptures.*

The sacred History relates the sad Ruine which hath befallen them who were notoriously Wicked, and from thence we infer things much to our profit.

(1.) *What a Tragical Account is to be found of the destruction of Mankind in general, by a deluge, none but Noah's Family escaped and those Creatures unto whom the Ark afforded shelter?*

The Scriptures do, in several Places, hint at this Story: But at large we may find

find it, together with the causes that moved the Almighty to destroy the Humane Race, and to execute a Vengeance full of astonishment. *Gen. Chap. 6. 7.*

It's highly probable that the Curse, denounced upon the Lower World for the Sin of *Adam*, did not fully take place until the Flood came to avenge the impieties of those Atheists. They lived long, the Earth did, in a manner, without Toil bring forth Plenty, and they had the Blessings of a *Paradisiacal* State, but not the Wisdom to improve them aright. They contemned the Goodness of God, and despised his Threatnings. Possibly they were hardened in their Impiety, when they beheld *Noah*, who preached Reformation, and Repentance, building his Ark, a Fabrick of large extent, in a place remote from any considerable Collection of Waters. He knowing, by Divine Inspiration, the Rain approaching, was under an Awe, and moved with a just apprehension of what was coming, took such Measures as shewed that he believed God, and in so doing condemned that Atheistical Age, as may be gathered from *Heb. 11. 7.*

I know some who pretend to Witt (which yet perhaps never rises beyond a quibble

quibble) have discovered their ill Will to *Moses*, by ridiculing the Account of *Noah's Ark*, as if it were a fabulous contrivance. They betray their Ignorance in Naval Philosophy, as in other Cases their want of right reason. That nothing improbable is asserted in Scripture concerning the capacity of that Ship, may be proved from an experiment which hath been recorded by a celebrated Historian. The substance of which History is here offered to the Reader.

Honni Arc.
Noe, p. 26,
 7. *Peter Jaussen* ordered a Ship to be built according to the proportion of *Noah's Ark*, in Length an Hundred and Twenty Feet, in Breadth Twenty, and in Depth Twelve. At first the contrivance was entertained with Laughter, and contempt by the Seamen who supposed it to be a ridiculous Business.

But afterwards it was found to be most convenient for a Merchant Man in time of Peace, as being a swifter Sailer, and managed with fewer Hands than other Ships: But the inconvenience of it was, it did not carry Great Guns, and in that respect had a greater resemblance to *Noah's Ark*, which was a Vessel of Peace and not a Man of War.

Never

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Never did this World see such a formidable Judgment as that of the Flood of *Noah*.

And such Inferences may be drawn from the consideration of it which are very instructive.

First, *we may see the danger of Apostasy, especially when with the corruption of Worship an Atheistical Conduct is conjoyned.*

An universal depravation had seized Mankind both as to Faith and Manners.

They were guilty of the Highest Degree of Unbelief. They were overwhelmed in Atheism, according to the Account we have of them in Scripture. They denied the Providence of God, and they who so do are easily seduced into a denial of his existence. And as to their Manners Violence, Rapine, and all sort of Injuries increased amongst them. When Men had made Shipwreck of their Faith they did soon drown a good Conscience. And when their Impieties, and Injustice were arrived to a prodigious Heighth, God brought a memorable Vengeance upon them, to let Future Ages see that he is displeased with, and he will revenge the bold Transgressions of Atheists.

And when God shall destroy this World, at the Day of Judgment, the generality

nerality of Mankind will be found sunk into Atheism or Unbelief and a woful degeneracy, as to Justice, Truth, and Honesty. And the Justice of God in destroying this Earth at the last, will be as conspicuous as it was in the Ruine that befell the Old World.

For God never brings Publick Judgments but for Publick Sins. And where Wickedness is become general, Punishment will also become as extensive.

The Perdition of the Old World came upon them at unawares, and in that respect, the Fate of the last Age of the World will resemble *Noah's* Floud; hardly any will believe it to be near. Altho' a Difference in another regard will be observed, the former Destruction of the Earth was by Water, this latter will be by Fire. The heat of Wickedness was extinguished by a Floud, the coldness of Devotion shall be punished with the Fires that shall seise both Poles, when this lower World shall be wrapt in Flames as a Winding-Sheet. The different Effects of these two great changes are to be considered.

Noah's Floud introduced Barrenness, for it's rational to conclude (as is before hinted) that one reason of the abounding
Violences

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Violences of Men in that Age was they enjoyed leisure, as not being necessitated to hard Labour, the Earth bringing forth Plenty of Fruit and Grain, without such Toyl as the Husbandman, since the Ground hath been corrupted, is forced to sustain for a Livelyhood: And with their leisure they had health, but an unhealthfulness infected the Air, as a Barrenness fell upon the Earth in the Ages following the deluge. Whereas a signal alteration shall be found in this lower World after the Conflagration.

The Earth shall be restored to a *Paradisiacal* State, and the Air be freed from Inclemencies, and every thing appear with a Beauty superadded to that which might have been discerned, before such time as our First Parents unhappily hearkned to the Temptations of the Devil.

So Glorious will the change be which the second *Adam* shall accomplish, that the good appearing then will be more joyful than the Evil which the First *Adam* introduced hath been lamentable.

(2.) *The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrhah affords very useful Instructions.* The ruine of those Cities is recorded in the Scriptures to be a warning to others. For if they sin like those People they may expect alike overthrow.

It was so remarkable, that when a Curse uncommon was wished to a Man it was in these Words, *Let that Man be as the Cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not,* Jerem. 20. 16.

The Judgment was tremendous both in it self and on the Account of it's unexpectedness. It was by Fire and Brimstone, which God rained down from Heaven. The very Emblem of Hell it self. And it was memorable in that only Four (if the Person who was soon turned into a Pillar of Salt may be reckoned) escaped, all being guilty, all were involved in Perdition.

To be burnt to death is reckoned amongst the severest Punishments inflicted on Malefactors, and Indicates the heinousness of the Crimes of those who are sufferers. If it be enquired why the God of Mercy did execute

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execute so terrible a Vengeance, it may be answered their Crimes were of the most abominable Nature.

The repeating of their Lusts would blister the Tongue of the recitor, and Poyson the Ears of the hearer. So odious is the Sin as it's not to be thought of without Indignation, that a Man pretending to Christianity should move in its defence, as did *Jouannes della Casa* an *A. Bishop of Beneventum* in a Book which he published at *Venice*.

But it is not to be wondered at if *Sodomy* in a literal sense should be pleaded for by one who was a dignitary in that Church, the *Metropolis* of which is, in Scripture, called *Sodom*. Had the Author undergone the fate of *Orpheus* who first instructed the *Thracians* in this abominable practice, none could have shewed him pity.

More Sins than one reigned in those wretched Cities: Pride, Idleness, Gluttony, Oppression of the Poor (*Ezek.* 16. 49, 50.) are laid to their charge. And add to this the consideration of their Impudence in Wickedness, which they attempted not to conceal (*Isa.* 3. 9.) and it will clear the Providence

of God from an over-rigorous severity. This was not the Character of a few, but of the generality, of the Inhabitants of those unhappy Cities. For if the Judge of all the Earth could have found, but Ten righteous Men among them, he would have stopt the Execution of his displeasure.

When we read this Tragedy it warns us to avoid their Sins, and to be careful that we do not obstinately, and boldly refuse Obedience to the Admonitions given us to repent.

The destruction that beset the *Sodomites*, who were amongst the worst of Men, may serve as a just admonition to others not to act as they did, however it may be, sometimes, dangerous to deal plainly with them who imitate their conduct, as the Prophet *Isaiah* found it, who is reported to have been sawn in sunder, upon the provocation which he gave the Nobility of the Jewish Nation in those Words, *Isa. 1. 10. Hear the Word of the Lord ye Rulers of Sodom, &c.* Tho' they pretended that he was guilty of Blasphemy in saying as *Chap. 6. 5. Mine Eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts.*

(3.) The

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(3.) *The Judgments which God executed on the Egyptians are to be considered and improved.* They were guilty of oppressing, and persecuting the Church of God. And God, who seldom or never suffers the Sin of persecution to go unrevengeed in this World, did not allow that unhappy Prince, who was the Author of the persecution, and that miserable Nation concerned in the Sin, to go unpunished. The Plagues of *Egypt*, which were forerunners of the overthrow in the *Red-Sea*, gave them warning of the danger they were in, and had they consulted their own Interest by hearkning to the Two Witnesses, whom God raised up, *Moses* and *Aaron*, they might have escaped Ruine. But divine patience at length expired, and they, by a remarkable Infatuation, were led on to pursue the Church of God until they were overwhelmed in destruction. What consolation is this to the Church when groaning under persecution? It's true the faithful are, when in the House of Bondage, too ready to despond of Succour, as were the *Israelites*.

But when they call to mind what remarkable Salvations God granted to his Church of Old, they may collect hope from thence, that the most High will not forget to be gracious, but that deliverance shall arise. And with the deliverance of his Church, destruction shall seize the Persecutors.

Almost in every Age memorable for Persecutions, memorable Calamities have been inflicted on the disturbers of the tranquility of them who worship the living God.

And as in other respects there is nothing new under the Sun, so since the coming of Christ the Church hath undergone Persecutions, and God hath saved them, and appeared, in a remarkable a manner, against the Adversaries of Religion.

The Judgments executed on Persecutors would fill a large Volume, I shall not therefore pretend to recite all the Examples that I could produce, but only mention some few which may show that the King of *Egypt* hath not been the only Monument of Divine Vengeance.

Nor will I suppose my Reader so ignorant of what has been transacted within

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within the compass of less than Two Hundred Years, last past, as to give him hints how to make reflections on some Things that might be offered to observation : If he knows not my meaning, I may apply that to him which was spoken to *Papias*, his abilities are not so great as I took them to be, but shall give him a few Historical Passages that are not commonly known to them whose leisure is so little as not to allow a large survey of Foreign Treatises.

One of the great Persecutors of the Christian Religion was the Emperor *Maximine* whose sad End *Lactantius* particularly Remarks in his Golden Treatise of the Death of the Primitive Persecutors, which Book is translated into English, with an admirable Preface by Dr. G. Burnet the present Bishop of Sarum, whose Words I shall transcribe after having informed the Reader
' that *Maximine* being routed by *Licinius*, and seeing no possibility of
' escape (the Author says that) the
' anguish of his Spirit, and his fear
' made him fly to death, as the only way
' to escape from those Evils with which
' God was pursuing him. He first eat
D † and

‘ and drank to a great excess as is ordinary for those to do who reckon that it is their last meal, that they eat ; and then he took Poyson, but his Stomach being so overcharged made that the Poyson had not a present operation on him, but instead of killing him outright, it threw him into a lingering Torment, not unlike the Plague, by which his Life was so far lengthned out to him that he felt his misery long. The Poyson began now to work violently upon him, it burned his Vitals so much that his insufferable pains threw him into a Phrensie, so that for four days time he eat Earth, which he dug up with his hands, and swallowed it very greedily, The rages of his Pain were so intollerable that he run his Head against a Wall with such force that his Eyes started out of his Eye-holes ; but as he lost sight of his Eyes, a Vision represented himself to his imagination as standing to be judged by God who seemed to have Hosts of Ministers about him all in White Garments ; at this sight he cryed out as if he had been put to the Tortures,

‘ and

‘ and said that it was others and not he
‘ that were to blame, yet afterwards
‘ he confessed his own Guilt, being, as
‘ it were, forced to it by the Torments
‘ that he suffered. He called upon Je-
‘ sus Christ, and with many Tears begged
‘ that he would have pity on him. He
‘ roared and groaned as if he had been
‘ inwardly burnt up, and thus did he
‘ breath out his defiled Soul in the most
‘ dreadful manner that can be imagi-
‘ ned.

That valuable Treatise of *Lactantius* gives an account of the death of others, who were implacable Enemies to the Christian Religion ; but since it's translated I wave giving any other Examples from thence, but shall offer some instances, of them, whom Divine Vengeance hath seized upon, for the Sin of Persecution, in an Age not so remote as that in which *Dioclesian*, and *Maximin* lived.

About the time that the Reformation was again revived under Queen Elizabeth in England, lived the Cardinal of Lorraine who was a Friend and Favourer of the Person concerning whom I design to give the following relation.

relation. Under the bloody Persecutor *Henry*, (the Second) of *France*, who himself came to a Tragical End, Chancellor *Oliver* was employed in persecuting the Protestants: This he adventured upon against the light of his Conscience. The miserable end of

Math. this Man is a remarkable warning to all Persecutors: He fate
Theat in Court condemning the In-
mitt. nocent; among others brought
Alm. 4. before him a Learned Young-
P. 78c. Man, *Peter Campagnac*, was condemned unheard. The Chancellor in a fury crying out, *Hang, Hang the Fellow*; upon which, *Campagnac* replied. *It's an easie matter for you to say so, but if you had been dealt with according to your deserts, you had your self been hanged, Thirty Years since: Do not you remember that when you then studiea the Law you killed one of your Acquaintance?* Upon which the Chancellor was struck with such Horror, and Madnets, that he fell ill, and raged in a dreadful manner against God. And in his Sicknes the above-mentioned Cardinal came to give him a Visit, to whom the Chancellor with amazing Horror, addressed him-
 self

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self in Words to this effect, *You Cardinal of Lorrain are the cause of the damnation of us all.* And notwithstanding that bloody Man endeavoured to comfort him, yet turning his countenance from him, the *Chancellor* dyed in miserable despair.

This wretched *Cardinal* with his Brother the bloody *D. of Guise*, who was a diabolical Instrument in the *Parisian* Massacre, came to an untimely End.

The *D. of Guise* was killed by order of *Henry 3d. of France*, and the *Cardinal* was strangled, and both their Bodies burned.

Not long before these Judgments were executed, an astonishing Punishment was inflicted, by the Righteous Judge of all the Earth, upon *James Latonius*, a Man concerned in the Inquisition, an horrid Persecutor. This unhappy Man, who against the Light of his Conscience, persecuted the Evangelical Truths, maintained by the Protestants, falling into despair, sending for some of his Acquaintance, spake to this effect. *My Sin* (says he)

*Matche
Theat.
Hist.
Mon. 1.
p. 765.*

is grievous, I have made it my Business to persecute the Word of God, and to oppress others, against the Convictions of my Conscience. Wherefore, having sinned against the Holy Ghost, I am without hope of Pardon. Moreover hence forward behold me no more as Latonius, but as a very Devil. At these Words, the Learned Men, who were present, were beyond measure astonished. One of them, a Dr. of Divinity, began to comfort him with the Mercy of God. To which Latonius answered, he was not ignorant that many Sentences in the Bible were full of Consolation, but that he wanted Faith in God: And added, that you may not doubt of the certainty of my Damnation, you will see that I shall dye in the Bed where I am. I serve for an Example to you, and for that reason I have called for you, that being warned by me, you should repent. And thus he dyed in the midst of dismal Groans, and in his Countenance, and all over his Body such marks of Divine Displeasure were left, as struck Terror into the Spectators.

(3.) God's Judgments, executed on some particular Persons, are loud Warnings

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nings to those who read the Scriptures, that they commit not the Sins, which brought Calamity on such, who were made the Monuments of Divine Displeasure. Besides the National Calamities that we read of in the Bible, Personal Sorrows make up no small part of the Sacred History.

An instance in this kind we have in *Adonibezek*, *Judg.* 1. 6. 7. A Man to whom Divine Providence gave Power, and Dominion over others, his ill using it was revenged in a remarkable retaliation. He cruelly cut off the Thumbs, and the great Toes of others, whom he Conquered, and he was treated himself in a like manner.

How instructive is this? It tells us that we ought not to revenge our selves on our Enemies, when we have them at advantage, for it's commonly retaliated in this World again.

Abimelech, the degenerate Son of a Noble Father, slew his Brethren on a Stone, *Judg.* 9. But, as Murder is a Sin seldom without a Vengeance following it, this was peculiarly revenged,
by

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by the casting of a Piece of Millstone, from an High Place, upon his unhappy Head, by which his death was occasioned.

And among other memorable Histories in this kind, that of *Haman* is not lightly to be past over.

He designed the Ruine of the Jewish Church and particularly of *Mordecai* for whom he had built a *Gallows*. Providence did retaliate the intended mischief upon *Haman*, and his wretched Family : Which shews that however Divine Vengeance, doth sometimes make slow advances to punish them who have been notorious Offenders, yet there is a just, and holy God, who beholds all things, Good, or Bad, in which Men are conversant, and will accordingly give them Recompence,

(4.) *The Calamities which have befallen Good Men do also give warning to others, that they sin not against that God who beholds the Sins of his Favourites with indignation.*

It is indeed dangerous, and a scandalous Transgression of the Law of Charity, to form a Judgment of any Man's State

State by the Events which attend him in this World; for Good, and Bad are exposed to sorrow, and enjoy in their turns prosperity, *Eccles. 9. 3.* To say a Man is wicked because of some extraordinary Affliction that is upon him, is a Crime that even the more civilized Pagans, who held those Places which bore the Marks of Thunder and Lightning in special veneration, would abhor.

Sometimes God brings Calamity on a Man to try him, not as a chastisement for any Sin more heinous than those of common Infirmary, but for a Proof of his Faith, Humility, Patience, Resignation, &c.

Of these Trials I may have occasion in the sequel of this Treatise to insert something more particularly. It is now concerning those Judgments which have befallen Holy Men that I am treating. God hath executed signal Judgments on those who have been Eminent for their Holyness.

When *Eli* the High Priest refused to use his Authority, for the restraining of his Wicked Sons, who rendred Religion odious by their Lewdness, he

he exposed both himself, and them to the displeasure of God. And as the *most High* gave him warning of the approaching Evil, so he did by the execution of Vengeance on *Hophni*, and *Phineas*, and by the Tragical death of their Father, admonish others, to keep up their Authority, and not for the sake of their Affection to their Relatives suffer the Honour of God, and Religion to be diminished.

David was a Man of extraordinary Piety, and Devotion, yet so deep are the Ways of Divine Providence, he was left, and contracted amazing Guilt to himself, by Adultery, and Murder. But did God who advanced him to the Throne suffer these Crimes to go unchastised? no. A Sword was drawn in his Family, that was not sheathed for many Years.

Amnon commits Incest with his Sister *Tamar*: *Absalom* in revenge slays *Amnon*, and *Absalom* himself escapes not; for he being vanquished in a Battle, when he contended with his Father for the Crown, was slain, hanging on a Tree, and had the Burial of a Beast: This was the End of a Young-Man disobedient

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disobedient to his Father, and whose Lewdness with the Concubines did admonish his Father of his murdering *Uriah*, and of his Sin with *Bathsheba*. This fell out whilst *David* was yet living, and after his death his Son *Solomon* slew another of his Sons *Adonijah*: So fearful is it, after this manner, to offend against the God of Heaven!

Nor have the lesser Crimes of those who have been remarkable for their Holiness been unchastised. *Jacob* dealt fraudulently with his Father, and Brother: To the former of which he told a direct Lye, the latter he cheated.

The time came when he was deluded by his own Children, who sent him his beloved *Joseph's* Coat as if he had been slain by a Wild Beast, which might (tho' not so intended by them) put him in mind of the false dealing he was guilty of towards his Father, whom of all Men, in the World, he ought not to have imposed upon.

Possibly it will be objected against the Conduct of Divine Providence, that these things discourage Religion. To what purpose is it for us to be Religious if we are not secured from the
Curse

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Curse of Gods Law as it is promised to them who belong to the Covenant of Grace ?

I answer that God brings these Calamities on them who are in Covenant, not because they are under a Curse, but to manifest his own Holiness, and it intimates that they shall not be condemned to Eternal Punishment, at the day of Judgment, as shall Wicked Men who it's possible never met with such Afflictions.

§. (3.) The History of the memorable Protections which Divine Providence hath granted to the Church of God, doth afford very profitable Instructions.

The Church hath often been reduced to the lowest Extremities, and then hath been the season for God to shew himself the Protector of his People.

When they were oppressed in *Egypt*, God appeared a Saviour, and raised up *Moses* and *Aaron* to conduct the *Israelites* out of the Land of Slavery.

Having had occasion before to make some Remarks upon this deliverance out of *Egypt*: I refrain enlarging on it, but pass on to consider some other remarkable

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remarkable protections given to that Nation in succeeding Ages.

For a considerable time the Twelve Tribes were ruled by Judges: Some of which they chose, others were in an extraordinary manner raised up, and spirited to appear on behalf of an oppressed Nation. If any object against the Conduct of Divine Providence towards the *Israelites*, in bringing them, so often, into Bondage, sometimes to the *Canaanites*, sometimes to the *Midianites*, and then to the *Philistines*; the answer is plain. They were guilty of notorious Wickedness and the generality of them were become Idolaters, before any such National Calamity invaded them. And however their Enemies might either out of Ambition, seek to oppress them, or because they were not so fully Idolaters as their Neighbours; for it's reasonable to think that they worshipped the true God, as well as the Gods of the *Canaanites*, and this might be one occasion of the rage of their Adversaries. But leaving that, we may plainly see that God did, very signally appear on their behalf, raising up Men, of *Heroic* Spirits, to
be

be their Deliverers, which was upon their Repentance, and Reformation.

If we take a view of what Calamities have invaded the Churches of God, in the latter Ages of the World, we shall find that no Storm of Persecution hath ever risen, but was first preceeded by the degeneracy, and crying Evils of them who pretended to Religion.

When God hath brought desolation on his Churches like an irresistible inundation, they have been guilty of despising his Ordinances, contemning his Ministers, neglecting his Sabbaths. We have sufficient Arguments to justify the Providence of God, in all these Events, and when we consider how God hath in times past, preserved his People, We have grounds to believe that he will not fail, as to the manifestation of his Goodness, and Compassion, in due time, to that part of his Church which groans under Persecution : It may be then expected when Reformation, and Repentance shall be found advancing amongst them, or when their Adversaries have filled up the measure of their Transgressions. Nor should we despair of it because of seeming improbabilities

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ties attending, as to second causes: For God hath promised to protect his Churches so far as that a number of Men shall be on Earth, who shall own the Christian Faith, as distinguished from *Judaism*, or the mixtures of *Paganism*, unto the End of the World, when *Christ* himself shall come to judge Mankind.

The Salvations which he gave to his Church in the Reign of *Hezekiah*, shews the Power of God; and the deliverance out of the *Babylonian* Slavery evidenceth that he can rescue as well as protect his People.

As to the former (*viz.*) the Salvation of the *Jewish* Church in the days of *Hezekiah*, how signally did God appear in commissioning an Angel to slay One Hundred Fourscore and Five Thousand of the Enemies of his People in one Night, 2 *Kings* 19. 35.

As to the *Babylonian* Captivity, deliverance might appear an impossibility. The *Jewish* Nation was subdued by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and held in Captivity by his Successor until the *Persian* Monarchy advanced it's self, by the destruction of the Posterity of him who
had

had burnt the Temple at *Jerusalem*. In that Revolution the *Jewish Church* was in great danger. And they would have been totally, and finally crushed, had not the God of their Fathers, whose protections past Ages had bore witness of, ordered those Events in Infinite Wisdom.

And thus notwithstanding the Revolutions that are yet to come to pass in *Europe*, and that probably will carry uncommon amazement along with them, and in them the Church of God may be exposed to Perils, yet will not fail the Faith of such as place their confidence in him: He will protect his Church. Human help often fails, and at this time it would look strange to offer an Argument to prove that the Protestant Churches shall be delivered from the Tyrannies of those who were prefigured by the Persecutors in the *Affyrian Empire*, yet the same God, who humbled *Nebuchadnezzar*, doth hold the Government of the Universe in his Hands; And he wants neither Wisdom, nor Power, to accomplish Salvation for his

I. Chap. II. *the Holy Scriptures.* 71

his Servants, and Time will shew that his compassion is equal to his other Glorious Perfections.

§. (4.) *The Histories, which the Scriptures give of particular Persons, who have been celebrated for their Piety, affords manifold Instructions.* The Bible is a Mirror in which Men may behold themselves, and whether they walk in a wicked course, they may discern their Pictures drawn in the description, which the Word of God gives, of the Impious, and may presage the Event that will at last attend them. Or if they are adorned with Heavenly Wisdom, they may see others, mentioned in this Holy Volume, whose Actions are proposed to their Imitation, and may learn, not only by what Principles they were acted, but see their Miscarriages, their Tryals, their Spiritual Conflicts, and the guidances of Divine Providence which they enjoyed. In the Historical part of Scripture we have an Account of Good-Men, and what is registered is very useful to us in several respects.

(1.) *The conversion of some, who have been eminent for Holyness, is recorded of which an advantageous use may be made.* God doth not proceed alike with all who are converted. Some Holy Men we have no particular Account of their first conversion: Nor was it necessary, because it would have swelled the Sacred Book to any immense largeness, which would have rendred it the work of a long Life to have read it through, which now may be performed, with facility, in the compass of a Year.

Nevertheless God hath of his Infinite Goodness ordered it, that the Conversion of some should particularly be recorded. The Apostle *Paul* was an Example of the Efficacy of Divine Grace, and of the compassion of *Jesus Christ*. With what a bitter Zeal did he ignorantly persecute the Christian Church? It pleased the great Redeemer to recover him, in a miraculous manner, as is to be read in the 9th. Chap. of *Acts*.

It would be a presumptuous thing to expect such a glorious appearance of the Son of God to convert any in our times, since the settled ordinary means
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of Grace are, usually, blessed to the saving good of them who are brought from a course of Wickedness to Holiness, and from a dependance on the Creature to a trust on God, through the great Mediator, which is the proper notion of Conversion. Some Events of Providence do occasion the first convictions in the Minds of Men, but the Word of God is the great Means by which it is effected. Our Lord did remit *Saul* to *Ananias*, for Instruction. And he doth, usually, by the Word accomplish this change, which is of Everlasting Advantage.

Some have thought that, in order to the Conversion of the Pagans, the Power of working Miracles shall be conferred on them to whom that Employment shall be assigned. And others are of opinion, that when the *Jewish-Nation* shall be brought to the Christian Faith, *Christ* himself will appear personally, as he did when he recovered the Apostle *Paul* out of his natural Estate. But leaving the truth of these conjectures to time, they do not favour the excuses which such as live unpenitently, under the Gospel, do

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make

make in their own defence, since they have sufficient evidence, in another kind, concerning the Truth, of *Christian Religion*, and the necessity of Repentance.

(2.) *The Piety of some Men hath been remarkable; and is recorded for our Instruction and Imitation.*

The Principles upon which they acted, and the regularity of their Conduct are both to be observed. An universal, tho' not sinless, conformity to the Will of God is remarked concerning several, whose Memories are Registered, in this Book of Life.

Some are recorded as memorable for their Faith : In this Grace *Abraham* did excell, and hath for that reason the Title of the *Father* of them who believe. Not that *Abraham* was defective in other Graces, for he was a Person of great resignation to the Will of God, of Humility, and of self-denial, as will appear upon reading of the History of his Life, written by *Moses*, in the Book of *Genesis*.

Job will be celebrated by all Ages for his Patience : Nor was he only excellent in that Vertue, but has the high

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highest Character given him, by the Great God, as being without parallel. And *Moses* who is supposed to have written the Book of *Job* for the consolation of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, is praised not only for Meekness, but for his Faith. And he gave signal indications of his being a Man of Prudence, and Zeal for the Glory of God, and of a Publick Spirit.

Elijah was a Man suited for the Work of Reformation, which God sent him about, by reason of his Courage and Zeal. And, to add one instance more, how excellent a Man was the Apostle *Paul*, who seems to have been born, on purpose to do good to others, who had not always the sense to thank their Benefactor? How patient was he under Afflictions? How soon reconciled to them who had offended him? which was not for want of Spirit. He did often discover a greatness of Mind that will leave him a Name above the common rank of Mortals, How humbly did he walk with God? and how sensible of Humane Frailty? They who read the History of this Excellent Man, with an equal temper of

Mind, will be inclined to think that no one ever out did him, except only the Man *Jesus Christ* who is God as well as Man. Never did the World see such an Example of Holiness as that of *Jesus of Nazareth*: He was without any blemish, and by his fulfilling the Law of God, shewed, that not only the Divine Precepts were possible to be observed, but that a peculiar Majesty doth attend them who are most careful to regulate themselves thereby.

How readily did he lay hold of opportunities, offered to him, for doing good to Men who were in Misery?

What a Glorious Example hath he left us of self denial, when the Publick Good calls for it?

What resignation to the Will of his Heavenly Father did he express? How great was his Piety and Devotion? How tender was he to his Afflicted and Tempted Disciples? These things should be considered and a likeness to him should be endeavoured after.

(3.) *The falls and miscarriages of Religious Men are also to be read with a due attention.*

The

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The Scripture deals impartially with Men: It not only describes the Wickedness of prophane Persons, but giving a just Account of the Piety of others, doth also register their failures: Not with a design to disgrace them, but for Reasons that are Wise and Holy.

The sin of *Noah*, the scandalous Incest of *Lot*, the Murder committed by *David*, the Pride of *Hezekiah*, the evil Frame of *Jonah*, *Peter's* denying Christ, do all proclaim that the best of Men, daily want the assistance of Divine Grace for their support. These things admonish us to be distrustful of our own ability: And the compassion of God manifested in their recovery, shews that none ought to despair who are sensible of their failings.

I look on these things to be some of the unsearchable Depths of the Divine Conduct, which we are rather to adore than to pretend to search out unto perfection. Nevertheless besides what has been already mentioned, a further reason may be produced, why it pleased God, whose Judgments are a great Deep, to permit these Lapses of Men of Holiness (*viz.*) that none

of the Great Men, whose Names are recorded in Scripture, might, in succeeding Ages, be brought into competition with *Jesus Christ* the alone Redeemer. Concerning others, who have any considerable part of their Lives written, some blemish is to be observed: But only of *Jesus Christ* it's to be remarked that he was Holy, harmless, Undeiled, and separated from Sinners,

I do here easily perceive an Objection will be raised (*viz.*) If such things as are disgraceful are recorded of them who in Scripture are proposed as Examples, how shall we know when we do well or ill in following their pattern?

I answer, (1.) *Example as Example, doth not oblige us to an imitation.* The reason is, it would then follow that all Examples would bind us: To assert which is to introduce Libertinism instead of promoting Holiness.

The Wickedness of Flagitious Men is recorded, not for our imitation, but partly to justify the Providence of God, in the Vengeance which overwhelmed them, and to be warnings to
us

us of the danger of such Practices. Nor does the Religion which others have been praised for, make their Actions laudable, when contrary to the Law of God. *Jacobs* dissimulation ought not to be a Plea for craftiness, nor *Solomon's* Idolatry an excuse for Superstition.

Besides which, some Actions of Excellent Men are not to be imitated, notwithstanding it were Good, and irreproachable in the Actors.

As *Abraham's* going to offer up *Isaac* shewed his love to God was superlative. But it would be the height of Phrensey for a Man to imitate him in such an Action.

Elijah went Forty Days Journey, but it's a folly from thence to infer the necessity of Pilgrimages, &c. Nor would the Idolatrous Priests, who urge the Example of his fasting Forty Days as an Argument for *Lent*, be willing to have that executed upon them which *Elijah* did on the Priests who worshipped Idols.

Other Examples are to be found in the Scripture, of Men who did Things that were warrantable in them,

they having an extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit: But, if in defence of their extravagancies, any shall pretend, they are moved by the Holy Ghost, I would desire them to prove it, by working of Miracles, which if they are able to do I shall then tell them more of my Mind if required.

(2.) *But an Example which God recommended to our imitation in his Word is to be considered, and followed.*

Our Lord (whom it would be a sinful Vanity to imitate in those Actions which he performed as Mediator (*viz.*) raising the Dead, by speaking; quelling Storms, &c.) is to be followed, in those things, in which he hath himself commanded us to consider him as an Example. His Humility is recorded, and he is to be looked on as an Example *John 13. 4*. And in other things, which are before hinted at, we should consider him as the Grand Example. And others, who are proposed to be Examples to us, are so far to be followed as they have been Followers of *Christ*, 2. *Cor. 11. 1*. Nor is an Action to be done, meerly, because *Christ* did

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did the like, but because he hath, by some Precept, made it incumbent on us to imitate him, and because it would have been our Duty had no precedent been registred in the Scripture.

Christ preached, but it is not the Duty of every Christian to be a Preacher, for some are expressly forbid- den from meddling with that Work.

Christ went from *Jerusalem* to *Gali- lee*, and yet I scarce believe any one, that is not gone a Pilgrimage from his Understanding, will say that it is in- cumbent on Christians to go from *Je- rusalem* to *Nazareth*; however some have, ridiculously enough, fancied it a Piece of Religion to visit the Sepul- chre of the Holy *Jesus*.

This being observed, I add, the Acti- ons of Good Men in Scripture that are neither condemned, nor contrary to any Precept in the Word of God, may be imitated. And that such Actions as are approved in the Scripture, and agreeable to the general Rules of Piety, Justice, Truth, Mercy, Temperance, ought to be followed.

There is a vast difference between the lawfulness of an Action, and the

necessity of performing it; for some things may be done, or left undone, and others it would be a Crime to neglect. It is with this general Observation that we are to form our Judgments of what things other Persons are to be looked on as Examples in, and in what they are not to be followed.

(4.) *The Historical part of Scripture, furnishes us with an Account of the Tryals, which Persons of Piety, and Vertue underwent: The consideration of which hath its usefulness.* Under this general term *Tryals* I comprehend not only persecution for Religion, but also Afflictions, which are common to Mankind. That they that are in Covenant with God, are under the special Conduct of Divine Providence, is a Truth which cannot be denyed without offering Violence to many passages in the Sacred Scriptures. This notwithstanding, they encounter the common Calamities of a World, which being under a Curse, is rightly stiled *Evil*. According to Col. 1. 4. if we view the History of the Best Men, we shall find that they had their Tryals, and some of

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of them in a very signal manner were afflicted.

The Tryals of *Abraham* were great, particularly that of offering up his Son *Isaac* recorded *Gen. 22.* It were easie to enlarge upon the several difficulties which this command of God did bring him into.

How contrary was this to that natural tenderness which is in the Breasts of Men? How did it seem to contradict a principle of the Light of Nature, which makes Men tremble at the thought of killing others? Yet *Abraham* was supported by the Grace of that God who thus tryed him, and his Faith has been celebrated by all succeeding Ages. History reports that *Snacherib*, whose Army was destroyed by an Angel, once inquiring how the *Jews* came to be so much the Favourites of God, was informed that it was for *Abraham's* sacrificing his Son as he did intentionally) to the God of all the Earth; whereupon that defeated Monarch took a resolution to sacrifice Two of his Sons in order to obtain Prosperity: Which, when they heard, they purposed

disappoint by killing their Father, of whose death we read 2. *Kings* 19. 37.

I have read a recent Story of a Person, raving mad, who in imitation of *Abraham*, slew a Child and gloried in the Nefandous Act. It's probable that the Idolatrous *Jews* took their practice of sacrificing their Children to *Moloch* from this of *Abraham*. So dreadful is it for Men to relinquish Divine Revelation about the Worship of God, God gives them up to a Spirit of Blindness and Error.

This History of *Abraham's* Temptation lets us know, that, if we belong to the Covenant of God, we shall find that God will not suffer us to entertain any thing in competition with himself.

He will make a separation between us, and our Enjoyments, if once we esteem them in that manner, in which we should reverence the *Supream-Being*.

Abraham having shewed that God was the chief Object of his Love, and discovered a profound resignation to the Divine Sovereignty, had his Son with a blessing restored.

What

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What Troubles did *Isaac* meet with in the Feuds between *Esau* and *Jacob*? What strange Tryals did *Jacob* encounter? Sometimes afraid of his Life upon the Account of *Esau's* Malice. Sometimes in Peril from the Inhabitants of *Canaan*, after the Tragedy acted, by his two Sons, in revenge of the affront offered to *Dinah*. After which his beloved Son was sold a slave into *Egypt*, whilst *Jacob* deplored him as slain by some hapless event.

Then he was in danger of losing two other of his Children, all which he considered with great sorrow.

Reflecting on what he underwent it's natural to draw this inference, that as this World is not so good as we hope, neither is it so bad as we fear: And those Events, which we sometimes, take to be most adverse, after a time we see occasion to place amongst the tender Mercies of our Heavenly Father.

The Afflictions of *Job* are in so lively a manner described, as has rendered his Book a valuable part of the Holy Scripture. Nor was the event less surprizing, than the Tryals for the time astonishing.

God

God restored him double to what he lost. And it's supposed that the Children of that eminent Man were translated to everlasting Mercy, notwithstanding they dyed Tragically, the reason is, because God did give him onely the same number of Children again, whereas all other Temporal Blessing were bestowed in double proportion.

How gracious is the God of Heaven, the Father of Mercies, and God of all Consolation?

David's tryals, before he arrived to the Regal Power were many, sometimes forced to beg his Bread, sometimes to fly for his Life, at other times to feign himself Mad, that he might be secure.

As to his Tryals after he was Crowned, having already had occasion to make reflections on them, I do not repeat what hath been spoken. It is plain by what *David* endured, before he attained the Kingdom, that God was infinitely gracious in ordering them, since by his Afflictions he was prepared for the lofty Station, to which he was, at length, advanced. And his own experience

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perience gave him those *Maxims* of Government which were useful when he enjoyed Peace, and Prosperity. Besides the excellent *Psalms* which he penned, when in his Solitudes, have been the support and consolation of them, who like that Heroic Prince have Encountred uncommon Tryals.

I should go beyond my intended Brevity if I should particularly describe the Temptations of those &c. who before the Appearance of the *Messiah*, were Types of him who was a Man of Sorrow. I shall conclude this particular, with a reflection on the Tryals of the Apostle *Paul*. They are briefly mentioned by himself 2 *Corinth.* 11. 24, 25, 26, 27.

He was treated like the Common Enemy of Mankind, and yet the World never saw a Man of a more noble temper, in respect of serviceableness to their everlasting Welfare, with whom he did converse. I have sometimes thought, and do not yet see reason for altering my opinion, that it may be argued that God is not in good Terms with the Inhabitants of this Earth, inasmuch as he suffers those who, like the Apostle

Apostle of the Gentiles, would gladly exhaust their Strength, spend their Wealth and take the greatest Pains to do good, to be treated in such an undecent Manner as they are very commonly. Let a Man live obscurely, and pass away his time like a subterraneous Stream, unheard, unknown, he may possibly enjoy tranquility, or, at least, be freed from extraordinary Inquietudes. Whereas if he once appear, with a resolution to do what Good he can, how shall he be rewarded? Every one draws upon him, and they are reckoned most happy who can give him the deepest Wounds, or are most virulent in their being adverse to his Interest.

The Day of Judgment will indeed be a time of recompence, and the Glories of Eternity will counterballance these Evils. 2 Cor. 4. 18. 19.

But as Men are unwise in being thus ungrateful to their Benefactors; so this occasions some, who otherwise are qualified to appear in Publick, to choose the Entertainments of Solitude, rather than be exposed to the malignity of those

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those who will ill requite them for their good Offices.

I should be glad if they, who are coming to act on the Stage, do by their kind Entertainment find reason to say that I am in a mistake.

(5.) *The Spiritual Conflicts of Holy Men with their implacable Adversary, the Devil, are registred in Scripture, and afford singular advantage to those, who are exposed to the like Assaults.* The Devil doth not fail to attack them whom he hath lost his Dominion over. Sometimes he appears as an Angel of Light, at other seasons as a roaring Lion, 1. Pet. 5. 9, 10. Hideous, and abominable Thoughts he brings into their Minds, which they do not always perceive to be from the Devil. This drives them sometimes to the Brinks of despair.

Some are under sad apprehensions of God's Wrath, and think that they have committed the Unpardonable Sin. Sometimes they are under doubts about God's Fatherly love in his Providence. Sometimes they loose their
Courage

Courage, and Spirits, and sink into the darkest Melancholly.

It's true, some Christians do not experience such Tryals; but pass their Lives in an happy tranquility, tho' destitute of raised consolations.

But others, and they amongst the best Persons, that ever were translated from Earth to Heaven, have had such spiritual Conflicts, as that they would not have been able to have supported themselves, if the Word, and Spirit of God, had not been their Help, and Refuge.

From the Word of God, Arguments may be drawn to repel the Temptations of the Devil. It was by the Holy Scriptures that our Lord conquered the Devil, as may be seen in the History of his Temptation.

Here is the Magazine, from whence we may fetch Armour for our defence, in this Spiritual Combat.

This gives us skill to manage the Holy War, and exhibits the Gracious Promises, which sustain the Afflicted, and that, by presenting us with Histories of the like Assaults, informs us that we are not the only Persons who are
thus

thus tryed, which yet Men do suppose, when under Temptation. And a consolation it is to consider, that we are not alone in our Miseries.

(6.) *Finally (that I may draw to a close of this Chapter) the Guidance which Divine Providence hath vouchsafed to Religious Persons, is observed in Scripture, and is profitable to be considered.*

Divine Providence orders every the least Event. It governs the Empires of the World, and extends it self to the falling of a Sparrow to the Ground.

Through how many difficulties did God guide *Jacob*? How many sad things did his beloved Son see, and feel, whom yet God guided, from his Father's House into the Pitt, and thence into a Land of Slavery, and there guided him through a Dungeon at last to a Palace?

What remarkable guidances had *David*? These and others, whose Names survive the rage of time, did experience, and record their experience of the Conduct of Divine Providence. Their Example is to be recommended to us. If we give our selves to an heedful

heedful observation of the Events which every day attend us, we shall grow in experimental Christianity ; shall be able to unfold the Mysterics of Divine Providence, in a manner better than what is to be Learned from the most excellent Treatises that have been written on that Subject. I speak not this to discourage from the perusing those valuable Books which have been written concerning God's Providence, but rather beseech my Reader that he would diligently survey them, withal adding, that it would be helpful to him, in his judging of the Conduct of God towards himself. Yet without this observation of Providence every Day, our reading discourses on that Subject, will only fill our Minds with Knowledge, not make our Hearts better. Let not the thought, that when you come to a strict observation of Divine Providence, your Vexations, and Temptations will be multiplied, hinder your thus doing. Temptations may indeed attend you, but the satisfactions you will enjoy, will abundantly make compensation.

Mr. *Blair*, a Man given to observation, used to say, *Observable things attend*

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tend them who are given to Observation. Memorable guidances of Divine Providence, remarkable Preservations, signal Blessings, shall be enjoyed by them who make Observation of God's Conduct, and of the Frame of their own Hearts, comparing each together. If this is not a Truth, I know not the meaning of what the Inspired Man hath written, *Psalms 107. 43. Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

Miscellaneous Observations on the Holy Scriptures. Necessity of Revelation. Reason and Revelation. An Account of the Penmen of the Scriptures. Poetical part of Scripture. Of the Creed. Rules explaining the Ten Commandments. Rule of Prayer. Of the Sacraments.

THE sacred Volume does not only contain an History of Events which are of a Monitory Nature, but presents us with Discoveries of Divine Truths, the Guides of our Faith, and Practice.

§. 1. *It was necessary some Revelation should be made above, and besides what the Light of Nature affords.*

The Light of Nature, or that Knowledge which is in the Minds of Men, deduced from the perception of External

nal Objects, and from the Observation which they make of their Reflections, however admired by some, is insufficient to direct Men to Blessedness, or to recover them out of Misery.

This Light of Nature is not sufficient to direct Men how to offer acceptable Worship to the Living God.

The *Pagans* acknowledged that God is to be adored. They unhappily fell into an Error about the Deity; erecting Altars to a Multitude of Gods; notwithstanding the wiser sort of them owned One Supream Being, whom they called *the Father of Gods, and King of Men.*

Some Nations were so deeply sunk into Error as to worship Beasts, Herbs, Stones, Diseases, &c. I shall not so much reproach my Readers understanding as to surmize that he wants a demonstration of the Vanity of the Gentile World, in this their senseless Idolatry: The Inference is plain, a Revelation superior to, and besides the Light of Nature is necessary to guide us in the homage we pay to the Almighty God.

Nor is it less defective in the Discoveries

coveries which are requisite to our pursuing *true Blessedness*.

What the true Blessedness of Man does consist in, is concealed from them, who have none but their own reason to guide their Searches. The common sort of Men, who lived (as it should seem by their never taking any great care to enquire into the Nature of true Happiness) only to fill up the number of the Humane Race, were utterly ignorant hereof. And such whose Spirits were framed with a better Alloy, did either confess their Ignorance, or what is equal to, or rather worse, betrayed it, when they made known their acquisitions in this sort of Knowledge.

The *Platonists*, who are rightly esteemed the chief Philosophers, could not find out Man's supreme Felicity. *Plato* in his Writings, and others of his Sectators, gave hints that shewed a greater insight into it than others, of which we may say, and speak the Truth, that those Notions were borrowed from the *Jews*, whom Policy obliged these Wise Men to conceal.

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The *Stoicks*, pretending to vanquish the Passions, turned Men into senseless Images. Their *Apathy* contributed nothing more to the well-being of Man, than *Narchoicks* do to his health, they may remove an acute disease, and leave the Patient stupid: The Lethargy that succeeds is more mischievous than the Pains were uneasy which they dissipated.

The *Peripateticks*, who made happiness to consist in the Action of Virtue, wandred far from true Blessedness by giving the name to that which wanted a right Principle, End, and Rule to render it truly a Vertue.

The *Epicureans*, by a Poet of their own called *an Herd of Swine*, are by the more sensible part of Men, banished from the number of *Philosophers*. The Tragical Death of *Lucretius*, a great Prophet of that Sect, who was a self-murderer (not to mention others of the same fraternity) doth shew that Happiness is not to be found in the Gardens of *Epicurus*.

Besides, the Light of Nature, unassisted by Divine Revelation, hath not been able to discover a right method
F for

98 *Observations on* Chap. III.
for redeeming Men from an Estate of
Mifery.

The Heathens were not altogether ignorant of the depravation, and guilt of Mankind. They made their complaints of the Wickednefs of the Age they were fallen into, which on that account was worfe than Iron, fo bad as that Nature had not furnished them with a Metal from whence they might take a Name for, or fuitable to the badnefs of the Humane Progeny.

*Nova etas agitur pejoraque fecula ferri
Temporibus; quorum sceleri non invenit
nomen, & a nullo posuit natura Metallo (ipsa
Juven.*

It looks as if he had read the third Chapter of the *Romans*: Which is as probable as the Tradition, which fays that the Apofle of the Gentiles held a correpondance with the Philofopher *Seneca*.

Nor were they unfeñible of their being obnoxious to the difpleafure of the Deity, as their Sacrifices, their Ablutions, and Lustrations do intimate. Now their not knowing how to ap-
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pease the incensed Justice of Heaven, evidences, that a Light greater than what shines from Nature is requisite. The more considerate Persons among them discovered the Vanity of their Rites and Ceremonies : Things at first invented by Men of designing Heads, embraced by the fondly superstitious, and supported by the negligent credulity of succeeding Ages, which took every thing for Sacred which Antiquity had bequeathed.

The celebrated *Roman Witt* derides the easie Folly of such who thought to wash away their guilt of Murder in River-Water.

*Ah: nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina
Flumineâ tolli posse putatis aquâ. (Necis*

The Confessions which these Men make, who discerned the most which the Light of Nature could shew, do give sufficient proof that some other discovery is necessary beyond that with which they had been acquainted.

§. 2. *God hath not left Men destitute of a Rule to direct them in what is necessary to be understood.* The Scriptures are given for that end, and they reveal what the glimmerings of the Light of Nature did but confusedly represent. God hath in them already revealed whatsoever, in this World, shall be made known relating to the obedience owing to him, or to the several Articles of Faith necessary to be received.

Farther discoveries of Sacred Truths laid down in the Scripture may be made, but no other Writings of Inspired Men are hereafter to be expected ; For what is contained in the *Old and New Testament* is sufficient to guide the Church until the happy period when the Son of God shall come to Judge the World, commence : After which no occasion will be found for such helps as Writings, or Preaching. Since as to Wicked Men the Day of Grace will be finished : As to the Righteous they will be perfect, and see and understand things so as to render these
Writings

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Writings unnecessary. They shall be arrived at compleat Blessedness. This **Book**, the Bible is of use only to instruct them in the way thither.

I would not be misapprehended in what I design, which is that tho' greater Light may be afforded to sundry passages of *Scripture* than what is enjoyed at present, yet that no New Articles of Faith, nor any other Method of Salvation, besides what the Bible does already contain, shall be revealed.

Several Ages have been remarkable for their improving particular Sciences, in the Circle of **Humane Learning**. Nor has it been less observable, by what degrees the Truths of the **Heavenly Doctrine** have been discovered. The great Truths of Salvation were made known as soon as the Covenant of Grace was revealed to *Adam*. Gen. 3. Other Divine Revelations have been commentaries on that Gracious Promise, wherein the Mystery of our Salvation, the *Whole* of the Blessings which God hath purchased, and *Jesus Christ* procured is contained. God made the First matter of the Visible World in a mo-

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ment.

ment, but took up the time of Six Days in regulating, and disposing the several parts of it, to the best advantage.

To allude to the work of Creation : All Divine Truth relating to Eternal Felicity was at first revealed at the promulgation of the Everlasting Covenant ; yet it is possible that Six Thousand Years must roll away before this Revelation be fully understood, since the great Mystery of God will then be accomplished.

The *New Testament* does not teach another way to Heaven than what the Prophets of Old discovered, or in other Words than what was darkly made known to the Church of *Israel*. The Apostle *Paul* was not saved in a way different from what the Prophet *Elijah* did regard, nor he by any other Saviour than him who redeemed *Moses*, and both these great Men paid their Homage (*Luke 9.*) to *Jesus of Nazareth*, whose Name the Apostle *Paul* delights to mention in his Epistles, and the Redemption which he procured that celebrated Preacher made known
to

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to the Gentiles. *Moses* may rationally be supposed more clearly to understand Divine Things than *Abraham*, and that the Father of the Faithful knew more than *Noah*, and with all we may grant that what was absolutely necessary to be understood, was revealed to the *Ancient Patriarchs*, as well, tho' not so fully, as to the wakeful Shepherd who conducted *Israel* out of *Egypt*. However *Elijah* might know things more fully than all before him, and *Isaiah* more clearly than that zealous Prophet, and *John Baptist* might more distinctly apprehend the Myteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, than all who lived in foregoing Ages; yet it was in the same way to Blessedness which they walked as was taken by them who, after *Christ's* time, made known, more clearly, to the World the Doctrine of Life, and Immortality.

And God hath now so finished the discoveries of his Mind that no more divinely Inspired Writings shall be added to what we do at present possess.

Should any come with pretences of Revelation, they must at least do Two

Things, the one is, work Miracles that shall carry a full conviction along with them of Divine Authority, the other is, what they reveal in their Writings, which they would have received as *Scripture* must be exactly agreeable to what the Word of God already written doth contain. For since the *Holy Scripture*, or in other Words the *Christian Religion*, is proved to be of Divine Original, that must necessarily be false which doth contradict it, and the Miracles (if there should be any accompanying the New Revelation) would be none other than *Lying-Wonders*. Now for any to assert their Writings to be by Inspiration, and as such to be received by the Church of God, is the way to bring themselves within the Verge of the Curse which blots their Names out of the Register of the Favourites of Heaven, (*Rev. 22.*) since it is thus threatned against those who make Additions to the lively *Oracles*. Nevertheless more full discoveries of Divine Truths, especially of the Prophetical part of the Bible may hereafter be expected.

Some

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Some Events of Providence will carry greater conviction with them than the clearest Arguments drawn from *Topicks* that affect not the senses. Some of the last Centuries have found out a vast part of the Earth that was concealed from the knowledge of *Europeans*, for at least as many Ages as past between *AUGUSTUS CÆSAR*, and *CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS*. Possibly the latter days (from whence we seem to be at no considerable distance) will find out the Golden Mines, for enriching the Church of God, which have been covered from the Apostolical, to the times present. But not to digress too far in this speculation. *This Luminous Volume* doth, in plain Terms, discover whatever is requisite for the Instruction, and consolation of all who endeavour after Eternal Life, in such a manner as that they need not be at a loss what to believe, or how to regulate their Conduct.

The pretences of obscurity, in some passages of the *Bible*, is not to be admitted as an Argument for Traditions to be received with a like Pious temper

with the *Holy Scriptures*. Granting that the reading of Humane Writers, (as contradistinguished to Divine) be useful for understanding some Paragraphs of *Scripture*, and *Arts*, and *Sciences* for explaining others; *Histories* written by uninspired Men are useful for explaining the prophetical part of *Daniel*, and of the *Revelations*, the *Mathematicks* are of advantage for vindicating the reasonableness of the *Mosaic Account* of the Flood, yet it doth not follow that the Old Testament wanted the Insipid Traditions of the *Jewish Cabbala*, nor the New Testament the Traditions of that Faction whose Errors are a mixture of *Judaism* with *Paganish Follies*.

§. 3. The perception of the necessity of Divine Revelation, and of the compleatness of the Word of God are Acts of Reason, which suppose a disquisition made concerning both. God hath bestowed understanding on us for this end, that we might discover the things which are proper for rational Creatures to entertain themselves withal. Some indeed never concern themselves about
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the Religion which they profess, whether it be right, or wrong, true, or false; which is an unworthy contempt cast upon the Oracles of God.

It is almost as bad to have no Religion at all (which is a fearful piece of stupidity) as to take up with it upon Grounds that are unbecoming. Christianity as it's delivered in the Scripture will bear the Test of the strictest Reason: A good Account may be given of each Article, or at least a substantial reason may be offered why it is above our conceptions. A middle way between the two extreams of Idolizing Humane Reason, and of casting off all use of it, in Divine matters is to be taken. They who make it their Business to enquire into them, and have the assistance of such helps as God hath vouchsafed, do discover that many passages which were objections and difficulties when they first applyed themselves to the Study of Divine Truths, were so, only, through their ignorance of the Customs, and Phrases of those Places where, and Times when, the several parts of the *Bible* were composed. To reject the exercise of Reason.

son is to act with a stupidity unbecoming them who are caused by counsel. For the proof of many Principles of Religion may be made out by the *Ideas* which are in the Minds of Men who have little else but their own understanding to guide them. The existence of a Deity, and the reality of Providence may be evinced from the belief of both, which the unenlightened part of Mankind have imbraced.

Allowing then the use of reason, it does not follow that we should believe nothing but what Reason of it self doth suggest. In things relating to the natural World we shall find that Men believe several Truths of which they can give but an imperfect Account.

Philosophers have raised *Hypotheses*, and drawn fine *Schemes* of the Works of Nature, rendering a probable Account of the appearances of things, which if brought to a Tryal, notwithstanding one part of their *Schemes* agree with the other, yet they would be found different from the Truth. This I think is plain to such as have taken the pains to compare the *Systems* of
Ancient

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Ancient, with the principles of Modern Writers. It discourages a Man from spending any great part of a short Life, in furnishing his Mind with notions that have been formed of things, which the different Sects of Learned Men have published, considering that possibly, the experiments of the next Age may find as many false conclusions in the Philosophy of the present *Vertuosi*, as they have, in Maxims of the Ancients.

If in matters wherein the Reason of Men is allowed to have its greatest Dominion, there be such uncertainties, and dissatisfactory Remarks, and yet a belief is accounted rational, much more may it be in Divine Things about which, until Revelation arrives to the Mind, a Man is void of any apprehension.

It would look oddly if a Man should deny the existence of the Sun, or the influence which it hath in the warmer part of the Year, and yet it is no reproach to be ignorant of the Nature of the Sun, or of that heat which it
com-

municates, however it be some sort of Ornament to know what other Mens speculations have been, which, when brought to a Tryal will be found the product of precarious Principles.

Nor is it less unreasonable to doubt of, or refuse an assent to the Truth of those propositions of Scripture which the Mind of Man does not find to be among the *Ideas* which *Sensation*, or *Reflection* hath furnished him with. For though they be not self-evident *i. e.* such as upon the First offer of them to a considering Mind will produce an assent, yet the means by which they are to be proved are such as that a Man, who hath not lost his Understanding, or is not under a particular Biais, may without fear of being guilty of a fond Credulity, assent to their credibility. To instance, that awful Doctrine of a *Trinity* of Persons in the Godhead is asserted in the Scripture. Now Reason doth not apprehend this as a self-evident proposition that the one, only, living and true God doth subsist in Three Persons. Never-
the-

Chap. III. *the Holy Scriptures.* III

theless that proposition is as true as this proposition (which invincible Arguments from the aspectable World do demonstrate) *there is a God.* The Evidence of the Truth of the Doctrine of the Trinity arises from the assertion contained in the Scripture [particularly from] 1 John 5. 7. *For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* Reason shews there is a God, and since God is a God of Truth, whatever he asserts to be true is such.

The Scripture is the Word of God, and that proposition now mentioned is Scripture, and therefore unprejudiced Reason doth receive it as true. And since, by as good evidence as can be desired, the Scriptures are capable of being demonstrated to be of Divine Original, it is no defect of Reason to believe it, tho' we do no more comprehend it than we do the nature of the Sun, or the warmth which it diffuses among the Inhabitants of this Earth. Nor doth this destroy Reason or make Men guide themselves by a *Faith of the Will*

Will and not of the *Understanding*, for it contains no contradiction to any regular *Idea* in the Mind produced by *Sensation*, or formed by *Reflection*. Reason tells us that *Two* and *Two* make *Four*, and that things equal to the same third are equal among themselves: And that *One* is not *Three*, nor three one in the same respect, yet it doth allow that a Being may be one considered in it self, and yet *Three* considered in another respect:

Dr. Wallis
Letters of
the Trinity.

A *Cube* may be considered in it self as one Body, consider it with respect to its dimensions it is *Long*, *Broad*, and *Deep*. And yet that Man would deserve to be banished to *Antuira*, who should say that *One Cube*, is *Three Cubes*, who nevertheless would speak properly enough if he should say that the same *Cube*, which in it self is *One*, is *Long*, *Broad*, and *Deep* in respect of its dimensions. Our Reason shews the Unity of the Godhead, God's Word declares the same Truth: Our Reason doth not say that this *One God* doth subsist in *Three Persons*, but the Word of God saith so, and thereupon tho' Reason

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Reason does plainly evince that it is a contradiction to assert the existence of Three Gods, and but One God, yet Reason, guided by unerring Scripture, doth say Three Persons subsist in the Godhead, and that the Godhead is but One. And the Account that is to be given why no more nor fewer than Three Persons are in the Godhead is because Writings of Divine Original do assert, and thus reveal the Truth now considered.

§. 4. The Errors that have crept into the Christian Church, concerning this fundamental Article of Faith, the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, are not the only Evils which have flowed from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures. For in Matters of less consequence Men have filled their Minds with extravagant Notions, from a misapprehension of the Words of the Sacred Text: Sometimes taking those passages in a strict sense which are figurative, and supposing that some Words stood for the same *Ideas* many Hundred Years since, which they serve to express in our Age, have run into an absurd way of talking,
ridiculous

ridiculous to all who are not blown up with a Spirit of giddiness,

The *Hebrews* in speaking to a particular Person would utter themselves in such Words as our Translators have, (tho' suitable to the Century in which they lived) so rendred as would now be very improper. Nor will any, who are not stupidly, or conceitedly ignorant, think they were under such Inspiration, in their version, as to make it criminal in us to speak the common Language of our Times instead of obsolete Terms which the foregoing Ages thought sufficiently elegant, since the Words we now use are of as good significancy, and do as well serve to inform us what Thoughts they stand for, as those, which were in vogue an Hundred Years since, did our Predecessors.

The Eastern Nations had very bold *Metaphors* in their Language, which would appear uncouth should any Man, out of a pretence that he would use no other *Phrases* than what are found in the Scriptures, addict himself to; for other expressions appear more agreeable in conversation than those in which our
 Tran-

III. Chap. III. *the Holy Scriptures.* 115

Translation hath given the sense of the Hebrew Words.

One instance instead of a Multitude may be produced; *Jacob*, at a congress with his Brother *E/au*, intreats his acceptance of a present, and urges it on him after a refusal (*Gen. 33. 10.*) in these Words, *Nay I pray thee, if now I have found Grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my Hand: For therefore have I seen thy Face, as tho' I had seen the Face of God; and thou wast pleased with me.*

Should a Man pass such a complement on another in this Age, and part of the World, it would be received with distast, which yet was as proper for that Age, when those Two Persons lived, as the most polite expressions with which our Times do abound. This observation will abate the prejudice which possesses some Men when they read the sacred Volumes.

Allow but for the difference of Place, and the Language of Scripture will appear as pertinent as the most polite harraugues

Harrangues of *Cicero*, or the exact Narrations of *Livy*.

Add to this the allowance that is to be made for *Proverbial* Speeches, which we do not, at this distance of time, know on what occasion were spoken, and how they passed into common sayings; and as much may be said in defence of the darkest passage in the Bible, of that nature, as for many of the Wise sayings in *Plutarch*, which do not well relish in this Age, because we do not penetrate into the Interest of those by whom they were uttered. The Scriptures in some parts are not so intelligible as latter Writings, through a want of observing what Sentences are *Parentheses*, and what are spoken in the general, as the Argument of the ensuing discourse. As to the latter it seems rational that the 32. Chapter of *Job* or at least some part of it should be looked on as the Contents of *Elihu's* discourse, which is recorded in the following Chapters. So judging we evade the charge of a needless *Tautology*, which Men who read the Scripture, only out
of

Chap III. *the Holy Scriptures.* 117

of spite, may take occasion, thence, to calumniate it withall.

As to *Parentheses*, they are many, and some of them very large. The whole 3 d. *Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians* is of that sort. After the first Verse the Apostle turns his discourse to quite another Subject, and resumes it not again until the 1st. Verse of the 4th Chapter. Which

possibly he who first divided the New Testament into Chapters did not so

*Leusd. Philol.
H. Grec. c. 3.
§. 7.*

well observe as the moment of the Case required: A Work that was which the Learned are not yet agreed to whom it may be with Truth ascribed. *Hugh the Presbyter †, Alexander Alejse,* and *Albertus Magnus* lay claim to it, but which deserves the Honour is uncertain. However it is evi-

† for him See
Hist. of Ref.
vol. 1. p. 309.

dent, they were not inspired who performed it, since an unnecessary separation between the beginning and ending of a continued discourse is to be found in fundry places

118 *Observations on Chap. III.*

*Dan. II. 1.
should be the
last of ch. 10.*

ces, the former being placed in one Chapter, and the latter in another, whereas, of right, both should have been contained in the same Section. And the like is to be observed in the divisions which that Learned Man

*Leusden.
Philol. Heb.
Deff. 1.
§. 5.*

Robert Stephens made of the Chapters of the New Testament into Verses. Sometimes that which might have been divided into Two or more Verses is put into One, and what belongs to the foregoing is adjoyned to that with which it has no considerable affinity. This Work was performed, in great part, by *Stephens*, when on a Journey, and for that reason the matter is excusable. The great advantage that hath resulted from it doth shew that a Man should never desist from pursuing a wise design which is above vulgar reach, because shallow Persons may deride it, as they did this happy invention of that incomparable *Grecian*.

§. 5. I believe it may be not unacceptable to the Reader if some Account be
given

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given concerning the Penmen of the several Books of the Bible. The method I shall observe, in making remarks on them, shall be the same that is in our English Bible in ranking their Books, which, though different from the *Hebrew* in the Old Testament, may, because of Custom, best be observed.

Moses, who wrote the first five Books of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, was a Man of slow Speech, great Courage, incomparable Meekness, and rare Learning.

The *Jews* say that he, and *Isaiah* understood what they wrote. He was the great Law-giver of the *Israelites*, an illustrious Type of Christ as Mediator.

Joshua, some suppose the Book bearing his Name was reduced into Method, out of the Publick Records, by the Prophet *Samuel*, and the like is thought concerning the Books of *Judges* and *Ruth*. A Learned Man gives this remark upon the change of *Joshua's* Name from *Oshea* by *Moses* when he had been employed to view the Land of *Canaan*. It cannot (says he) be thought to give any less than

*Fearson. on
Creed. p. 70.*

than a present designation of his Person to be a Saviour of the People, and a future certainty of Salvation included in his Name unto the Israelites by his means.

It is conjectured that *Joshua* wrote the last Chapter of the Book of *Deuteronomy*, tho' with more probability it's referred to *Ezra*, after the return from the *Babylonian* Captivity.

The Books of *Samuel* are supposed to have been written, partly by the Prophet whose Name they bear, and partly by *Nathan* and *Gad*, two Inspired Men, who lived in the Reign of *David*. As to the Books of *Kings*, possibly, they are in the right who think that the Prophet *Jeremy* compiled them, collecting them from the Writings of *Iddo*, *Shemajah*, and other Holy Men who wrote the History of the time that, when they lived, was current.

The Two Books of *Chronicles*, which the *Jews* place last in their Bibles, seem to have been written by *Ezra* who also wrote

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wrote that Book which hath his Name prefixed to it in our Bibles. A Man he was that deserved highly of the *Jewish Church*, concerning whom they have a saying, *that had not the Law been given by Moses, Ezra had been worthy to have received it.* His Zeal for God's Glory, his publick Spiritedness do recommend his Memory to the admiration of all Ages to the End of the World. He was a Man whom God highly honoured, and such was his reputation at Court that, he obtained remarkable Favours for his unhappy Nation, and with Renown he filled the chief Seat of the *Sanhedrim* which consisted of Seventy, or Seventy-Two Men (after the example of the Seventy Elders in the time of *Moses*) who were Persons of Skill in the *Jewish Law*, and in whom Justice, and Piety were expected to shine in an extraordinary manner. With him was joyned *Nehemiah*, who ruled the civil State of the *Jews*, with a courage, and fidelity parallel to what was observed in *Ezra* in the conduct of Ecclesiastical Affairs. A memorable Favour was this which God bestowed on the *Jews*, upon their return out of *Ba-*

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bylon, like to what he vouchsafed to their Predecessors, who by *Moses* and *Aaron* were conducted out of *Egypt*.

The Book of *Esther* seems to have been written by *Mordecai*; the name of God is not once to be found in this Book, and for that reason (Tradition says)

the *Jews* throw it on the
Leighs B. Ground, before they read

D. p. 44. it, but however that be, it contains as remarkable an

History as any the whole World affords.

A *Jewess* advanced to the Queendom of *Persia*, a deep Plot for the destruction of the Church of God continued, and carried on by *Haman* (who for that reason is counted a Type of the Devil) but wonderfully detected, and defeated by the compassion of God, with an History of the surprizing advancement of a Man designed for an ignominious death, is the subject of this Book, and it is so wonderful that the *Jews* say that in the days of the *Messiah* all the Book of the *Prophets*, and *Hagiography* shall be abolished, except the
 Book

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Book of *Esther*, which shall remain, as
also the Five Books of *Moses*.

Next to this in our English Bible the Book of *Job* follows. It is with indignation (I confess) that I read some passages which intimate that *Job's* Book is Parabolical, and that never any such Man was living. The Prophet *Ezekiel* mentions his Name, and so does the Epistle of *James*, as of a Person Eminent for Piety, and Patience, who experienced the compassion of God in his restoration to Felicity, so as to be a Monument of Divine Favour, to all succeeding Ages,

Moses is judged to have written this History for the consolation of the Church in the Wilderness, as hath been observed, Page 75.

Raleigh
Hist. part.
1. B. 2.
ch. 3.
§. 4.

The Book of *Psalms* was composed by *David*, *Heman*, *Asaph*, and one of those Divine Hymns by *Moses*, *Psalms* 90. a Compendium it is of both Testaments, and seems to have been in that order, wherein we find it, before our Saviour's time : The second *Psalms* be-
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ing quoted by the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, in a Sermon at *Antioch*, *Acts* 13. 33. whereas the other Quotations in the New Testament do mention only the Book in general, out of which they were taken, without the Chapter, or Verse, and sometimes without naming the Book it self: This Book is the principal of those which the *Jewish Church* called the *Hagiography*.

They distributed their Bible into Three Parts, *the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiography*, to which our Lord alludes in that passage *Luke* 24. 44. under these Three Generals they comprehend all the Writings which we have from *Genesis* to *Malachi*. Some *Psalms* are stiled *Penitential*, as *Psalms* Sixth, Thirty-Second, Thirty-Eighth, Fifty-First, Hundred and Second, Hundred and Thirtieth, Hundred and Forty Third.

The Book of *Proverbs* was written by *Solomon*, for the greatest part, who also compiled *Ecclesiastes*; they remain a Monument of his Repentance.

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The *Canticles* bear his Name, a Book mysterious, and not to be viewed by a vain Mind, forbidden by the *Jews* to be read by any that are not advanced to the Age of Thirty.

Isaiab wrote in a most lofty Style, uttering himself with a Grandeur suitable to the Nobility of his Birth. He was of the Royal Family, to whom the *Jews* pay this respect: They say *Moses* and *Isaiab* alone understood the Things they foretold. He died tragically by the command of *Manasseh* as hath before been observed.

Jeremiah, who lived when Ruine came on the *Jews* by the *Babylonian Army*, and escaped Death at the taking of the City *Jerusalem*, could not avoid being stoned to Death at *Zoan* in *Egypt*. Besides the Prophecie that hath his Name prefixed, he wrote the Book of the *Lamentations* upon the desolation of *Jerusalem*, in a stile not to be paralleled by any Author whose Tragedies are now extant.

Rawleigh.
B. 2. ch.
3. §. 2.

Ezekiel, a prophet of extraordinary Note, an excellent Orator, whom the *Jews* forbid their Young Men to read because of the Myfteriousness found in his Writings, was slain by a Leader of his own Nation whom he reproved for Idolatry. He is often called *Son of Man*, to mind him that he was of the Humane Race notwithstanding his Angelical Revelations.

Daniel was a Man highly favoured of God, whom he daily worshipped; advanced to the Highest Dignities under *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *Darius*; whose Prophecies, concerning the time of the *Messiah's* appearance, do give as clear proof for the Truth of the *Christian Religion* as any passages of the Old Testament; And whose Visions concerning the *Four Monarchies* do render the Ambitious Designs, and Expectations of such as aspire after a *Fifth Earthly universal Empire* like the hope of the Hypocrite-

Leusd.
Philol. Heb.
Grac.
Diff. 8.

The Reasons given why *Daniel* and *Ezra* wrote partly in the *Chaldaic Language*, besides what have (*Chap. 1*) been offered, are
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because they loved, and because their Books treat of things done in *Chaldea*, and of the Emperors of *Babylon*, with the extinction of whom the *Assyrian*, which was the first universal Monarchy, came to its determined period.

After this Book the Writings of the Twelve lesser Prophets do succeed; who are so stiled, not because they were of lesser Authority than *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, the three greater Prophets, but because their Prophecies are less in quantity. They were all used to be bound in one Volume, and for that reason were accounted but one Book. Their Names follow. *Hosea* is thought to have lived in the same Age with *Isaiah*.

Joel lived in the time of *Ahab* King of *Israel*.

Amos lived in the time of *Jeroboam*, and after a bold reproving his Idolatry, suffered a Tragical Death: He was an Herdsman, and in an extraordinary manner excited to reclaim the Idolatrous *Israelites*, which he not accomplishing left them without excuse.

Obadiah wrote a Propheſie principally againſt the *Edomites*: Some judge he was a Proſelyte of the Poſterity of *Eſau*, others take him to have been the ſame whoſe Piety towards God, and care of the Prophets are celebrated in the Book of *Kings*: Probably both may be true of the ſame Perſon.

Jonah was a memorable Type of *Chriſt*, in his being Three Days, buried in the Belly of the Whale, yet certainly was the moſt unlike to *Jeſus Chriſt*, in his Temper, of any Man who is in the Bible recorded to have a Principle of Holyness. The *Rabbins* ſay of him that he was the Son of the Widow of *Zarephath* whom *Elijah* raiſed from the Dead. The place where he was buried (according to Tradition)

Travellers report to be
 * *Tavern.* near *Nineveh*; the Ruins
Persian Trav. of that great City remain
 B. 2. ch. 5. to this time, as an exact
 * *Observer* doth relate.

Micah is accounted the ſixth of the leſſer Prophets, of the ſame time with *Iſaiah*, he is memorable for propheſying
 of

Chap. III. *the Holy Scriptures.* 129

of the Town where the *Messiah* should be born, as well as for his own being thrown down a precipice, and slain in the year, from the creation of the World, Three Thousand Two Hundred and Fourty.

Nahum is thought to have succeeded *Jonah* in his prophesying against *Nineveh*.

Habakkuk is recorded the Eighth of the lesser Prophets, and lived (according to conjecture) about the time of the *Babylonian Captivity*.

Zephaniah lived in the same Age with *Jeremy*, and his Prophecies contain certain threatnings against the *Jews*, and other adjoyning Nations, and concludes with a gracious Promise of restoration to them who were Heirs of the Covenant.

Haggai, by his Prophecies, encouraged the rebuilding the Temple, and is reported to have dyed Fifty Years after the return from *Babylon*.

Zechariah

Zechariah, with a Divine Zeal, joyned with *Haggai* in exciting the *Jews* to re-edifie their Temple, notwithstanding the discouragements cast before them, by their Enemies.

These Two Prophets were Types of the Two Witnesses in the *Revelations*. When God brought *Israel* out of *Egypt*, *Moses* and *Aaron* were his Messengers. When he intended a reformation, *Elijah* and *Elisha* were inspired. When he designed the reestablishment of Religion, *Haggai* and *Zechariah* were appointed, by their Prophecies, to further it, whilst *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* in Church, and State sought the welfare of the *Jewish* Nation.

Malachi is the Twelfth of these Holy Men; with him the Spirit of Prophecie ceased until the Age when *Jesus* of *Nazareth* the great Prophet, of whom all the foregoing were Types, came into the World.

These were the Men whom the God of Heaven chose to illuminate his Church, in the way to Eternal Blessedness.
Their

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Their Names have survived the wracks of Time, and the devourings of Age, which have consumed the once glorious Monuments of the Princes of this World.

These were the Holy Men who foretold the coming of the *Messiah*, who being the head of the Church substituted his *Apostles* to succeed the Ancient Prophets. The *Writings* of the *Apostles*, and their Companions the *Evangelists*, are nextly to be considered. The New Testament hath been preserved by the care of Divine Providence.

Ecclesiastical History reports, that the Evangelist *John* (who wrote the *Gospel*, the Three *Epistles*, and the Book of *Revelations*) did, at the request of the *Asiatic* Churches, give his attestation to all the Books of the *New Testament*. He was qualified for his so doing by the Inspirations with which he was blessed, and by the length of his Life, which was so far extended as that he survived all the *Apostles*. Some pretended Gospels came abroad, whose Names are left to Posterity, and others, whose Authors are not known, are
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sunk into the common Ru-
ines of Time.

It was pretended that *James* wrote a Gospel containing the Life of the Virgin *Mary*, to the coming of the Eastern Wise Men to congratulate the birth of *Jesus*. But the doubtful Stories in that Book have vanquisht it's Authority.

The *Hebionites* also had a Gospel, thought to have been a corrupt Translation of *Matthew's* Gospel into *Hebrew*.

Another passed under the Name of the Gospel of the *Nazareens*, who together with the Gospel of *Christ*, mixed the observation of the *Mosaical* Ceremonies.

One *Fatian*, the Leader of the *Eucrastitic* Sect, had the folly to compile a Gospel: Ancient Writers say, he left out whatever might prove *Jesus* to have been of the Line of *David*.

Some

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Some fancy *Paul* wrote a Gospel because of what is mentioned *2 Tim. 2. 8. According to my Gospel*, in which the Apostle refers to *Luke's Gospel*, who was his Companion, and *Amanuensis*.

Notwithstanding these Artifices of the Devil to obscure the Gospel, and to render suspicious the Authority of the New Testament, yet the God of Truth hath so far favoured his Church, that we have uncontrollable evidence for the Purity, Integrity, and Divine Original of the several *Books*, and *Epistles* of this part of our *Bible*.

The Evangelist *Matthew* was an Apostle, whom Jesus Christ called to that Office *Mat. 9. 9.* I stile him an Evangelist because he wrote one of the Four Gospels. Mentioning the Apostolical Office I think it not improper to insert something concerning it, hoping it will be acceptable to the inquisitive Reader.

An Apostle was a Man, who having seen *Jesus Christ*, and embracing the Evangelical Doctrine, was commissioned by our Lord to preach the Gospel

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pel, and to settle Churches every where, by an immediate call, having a Power of working Miracles, for the confirmation of that Doctrine in the delivering of which, he himself was under the influence of Inspiration. This is a description of an Apostle of *Jesus Christ*. Ministers of the Gospel do succeed them in the preaching the Word &c. yet the Apostolical Office was designed for the first laying the Foundation of the Christian Church, and the Apostles were to be Witnesses of *Christ's* Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven. The ceasing of the Divine Inspiration, and the power of working Miracles shews that none do succeed in that Office. *Evangelists* were not their Successors, nor Pastors of Churches, (or Bishops they being the same) since they were contemporary, with the Apostles themselves, whose Office was extraordinary, and ceased at their death.

Matthew wrote his Gospel, about Nine Years after *Christ's* Ascension. He preached in *Ethiopia*, and by him Way was made for the Evangelical Doctrine to reach the *Indies*. Ecclesiastical History reports that he was stoned to Death.

The

The Picture-Drawers of the *Primitive Heroes*, with the Effigies of this Apostle adjoin the relemblance of a Man, because say some, *Matthew* describes the Humane Nature of Christ in the beginning of his Gospel. The original of the fancy was from some of the Ancient Fathers (Men who lived after the Apostolical Times) who applyed what is spoken in the Propheſie of *Ezekiel*, and the *Revelation* concerning the Four living Creatures whom our Translation does harshly ſtile Four *Beaſts*, having the ſign of a Man, of a Lion, of an Ox, of an Eagle, to the Four Evangelists *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*. *Mark* is compared to a Lion becauſe his Gospel begins with the Preaching of *John Baptist* who lived in a Wilderneſs. *Luke* is reſembled to an Ox becauſe he begins his Gospel with an account of *Zechariah*, the Priest, whoſe Office was to ſacrifice ſuch Beaſts in the Temple. *John* hath the reſemblance of an Eagle, on the account of his taking an Heavenly Flight in deſcribing the Divinity of *Jeſus Chriſt*, in the beginning of his Gospel.

Mark's

Mark's Gospel is placed next to *Matthew's* in our Bibles.

It is recorded of him in History that he was of the Jewish Priesthood, but mutilated himself, cutting off his Right Thumb, that he might not attend on the Office. He is supposed to have been of the Seventy whom our Lord commissioned to preach the Gospel. *Peter* dictated to him, and he wrote what we possess. The reason of the supposition is drawn from his more fully describing *Peter's* Fall, and being more short in the Account of his Repentance than the other *Sacred Men*, who wrote the Evangelical History. It's uncertain whether he dyed violently, (or not) as some say, who affirm that he was dragged through the Streets by Wicked Men and so expired.

Matth. i.
Theat. Hist.
Mon. 4.
p. 128.

Luke, a Learned Man, a Physician beloved of the *Apo le Paul*, and a Companion of his Travels, wrote his *Gospel* under the inspection of *Paul*, about Fifteen Years after *Christ's* Ascension. His Stile is fine, and suitable for an Historian.

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istorian. It is uncertain what is related of his Death, some affirming he lived Eighty Four Years, others that he was Martyred in *Bythinia*, possibly both may be true.

John, the Apostle, hath his Gospel placed next in our Bibles, was distinct from *John Baptist*, whom *Herod* beheaded: And is sometimes stiled *John the Evangelist*, and the *Divine*, he was surnamed a *Son of Thunder*, by our Lord, as was his Brother *James*. *John* is said to have been the wealthiest of all the Apostles, and for that reason, our Lord when dying recommended his Mother, the Blessed Virgin, to the care of this Disciple; was the youngest Apostle, when at the Passover he leaned in the Bosom of Christ, and the beloved Disciple. He did not with the other Disciples deny his Lord, and God gave him long Life, being Ninety Nine Years old when he dyed, having been, in a miraculous manner, preserved from death, when cast into a Caldron of boiling Oyl; and afterwards was banished into the *Ile of Patmos*. The design of
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his Gospel is to confute the Hereticks which denyed the Divinity of our Redeemer.

After the History of our Lord, recorded by these Inspired Men, *The Acts of the Apostles* obtain a Place, containing an History of the beginning of *Christian Religions* spreading amongst the *Pagans*. It was written by *Luke*, who wrote the Gospel, and was in like manner dedicated to a Person of Quality *Theophilus*. The Stile is Masculine, and the Subject, as has been said, Church History. The Acts of *Peter* and *Paul* are chiefly recorded.

Could a certain set of Men have found as evident Arguments for *Peter's* being at *Rome*, as this inspired Man gives for *Paul's* being there, it would have been with them an uncontrollable argument for the supremacy of the *Romish Pontiff*.

The Epistles are placed next in our Bibles tho' not according to the time wherein they were written.

The

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The Apostle *Paul* was the Author of several. Whilst I write concerning this excellent Man, I must detain the Reader a short space of time. His Name before he was converted was *Saul* he was of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, born in a City where he had his freedom as a *Roman*; Educated in *Jewish* Learning under *Gamaliel*, miraculously converted, by the appearing of Christ from Heaven. Of a temper lively, full of zeal, after his becoming a Christian, equal to what he was remarkable for, whilst a Pharisee. He was patient in adversity, and humble in his conduct, which proceeded from a Christian Principle, not from a want of Spirit, for, when Prudence required, he discovered a greatness of Mind laudable, and to be defended, as in pleading his Priviledge as a *Roman* when unjustly cast into Prison. His stature of Body was short, and for that reason, say some, he was called *Paul*, tho' more probable is their opinion who hold he had this Name given him upon his converting the Proconsul *Sergius Paulus*. He seems to have laboured under the disadvantage of an impediment in his utterance, and to

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have been afflicted with some acute distemper (which he calls a Thorn in the Flesh) that put him in mind of his frailty as a Mortal Creature. His Travels were considerable thro' a great part of the *Roman Empire*. God blessed him with great success, and his Name remains in lasting Records of Sacred History. His Revelations, from Heaven, were many, and his skill in declaring, and vindicating the Principles of revealed Religion such as is not to be paralleled. This excellent Apostle was chiefly employed among the *Gentiles*, and founded many churches, in which was celebrated the worship of his Blessed Redeemer *Christ*, whose Name occurs some hundred of Times in his Epistles.

Matthie.
Hist. Theat.
Mon. 4. p.
128.

He was at length honoured with Martyrdom under *Nero's* Government, in the Fourteenth Year of his Reign, who was rightly denominated an Enemy of Mankind. He lost his Head by the stroke of the Executioner. His Soul, translated to
Para-

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Paradise, is judged to obtain the next Place to the *Everlasting Redeemer.*

Another Sacred Penman of the New Testament was *James*, who wrote the Epistle that goes under his Name, being the First of the Epistles, which are denominated *General*, the reason of the Title is they are not directed to particular Churches, as the Epistle to the *Romans*, &c. but to the whole Church of Christ in all places.

Tho' how the two latter Epistles of *John* came by this Title, unless because they contain general Rules of Living, is not so easie to determine. This *James* seems to have been the Son of *Alphaeus*, called the less, who was slain by the Fury of the *Jews*, who cast him from a lofty part of the Temple.

Peter, who was an Apostle, wrote Two Epistles: He was a Man of a warm Spirit, and however he fell into a deplorable Sin, his Repentance is Registred, and his Pardon was granted. His presumption should warn all against trusting in their own resolutions.

His Repentance should encourage all to apply themselves to God's Mercy, and not give way to despair. He was crucified with his head downward.

Jude also wrote an Epistle, concerning which *Origen* gives a Testimony, to this effect that it was not great in bulk, but considerable for the Matter. He was an Apostle (not that *Judas* surnamed *Iscaiot*, who betrayed his Master) but the Brother of *James* whom *Herod* martyred.

This Apostle whose Name is Registered *Luke* 6. 16. and who is called *Lebbeus*, and *Thaddaus*, after he had preached the Gospel in *Mesopotamia*, went into *Persia*, and there finished his Life by Martyrdom.

These were the Inspired Men whom our blessed Redeemer chose to be his Scribes to consign his History, and Doctrine to Writing. It was for wise and holy Reasons that our Royal Prophet wrote no part of the New Testament, with his own Divine Hand; preventing, or cutting off occasion of Idolatry. The
Israelites

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Israelites, who lived discontented under the conduct of *Moses*, would probably have worshipped his Body, when Dead, had not God given him an honourable Interment, in a Place unknown.

How much more might they fall into an Idolizing of the Writings of *Jesus of Nazareth* who fondly adore Relicks, the Garments, the pretended Bones of those Saints, who when living worshipped *Jesus*, and who translated from this Earth celebrate his Praise among the Blessed Inhabitants of Heaven. The Holy Angels, whose Hymns, tho' uttered in a more glorious manner than we can the Sacred Poems recorded in our Bibles, yet for substance are the same, since those Blessed Spirits are said to sing the Song of *Moses*.

§. 6. The poetical part of Scripture is not easily discerned by common Readers. I shall make some Remarks briefly on that part of the Bible which is of that Nature. Poësie hath been Ancient; possibly some of the First Writings that ever were composed have been metrical. It is certain that some parts of the

the Bible as Ancient as any Writings
are poetical.

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Solomons Song, Lamentations, are all so accounted. *Job* is written in a lofty Stile, and the Phrase so excellent that it may compare with any *Epic Poem*, in which sort of Writing scarce more than Four Men have been successful, besides this Inspired Author. The Fifteenth of *Exodus* is a Poem, and the Thirty-Second of *Deuteronomy*. The Fifth Chapter of *Judges* contains the Song of *Deborah*, and in *Samuel* Book 1. Chap. 2. is *Hannah's* Canticle, resembling the Song of the Virgin *Mary* in the New Testament, and the 3^d of *Habakkuk*, And the Fifth and part of the Thirty-Eighth of *Isaiah*, and other Paragraphs of the Bible are in Verse; Some of which, are only wrote in-measure; without regard to Rhym, but others mind both the Termination, and the measure. This not being easy to be discerned by them, who understand not the *Hebrew*, I-will pursue it, passing on to what may be more useful to promote Practical Holyness.

§. 7. The

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§. 7. The sum of all Saving Knowledge may be contained under these Four Heads,

The Things we are to believe,
What is to be practised,
What is to be prayed for,
And what is to be partook of, for
the promoting our Spiritual and Eternal Welfare.

As to what we are to believe, the Primitive Ages of Christianity had a short abstract of Divine Doctrine, commonly called the *Apostles Creed* divided into Twelve Articles according to the number of the Authors. Each one is said to have composed his after this manner. 1. *Peter* began saying, *I believe in God the Father Almighty.* 2. then *John* Added, *Maker of Heaven and Earth.* 3. After him *James* said, *I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.* 4. *Andrew* followed in these Words, *who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.* 5. Nextly *Philip* who spake, *Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was Crucified, Dead, and Buried.* 6. *Thomas* subjoined

Leigh B. 5.
ch. 1.

Leusd. Phil.
lol. Heb.
Grac.
Diff. 4.

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subjoined *he descended into Hell, on the Third Day he rose again from the Dead.* 7. *Bartholomew continued, he ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty.* 8. *Matthew pronounced this Article, From thence he shall come to judge the Quick and Dead.* 9. *James the Son of Alphaeus hath this Sentence ascribed to him, I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholick Church.* 10. *Simon called Zelotes uttered these Words, The Communion of Saints, and Forgiveness of Sin.* 11. *Jude the Brother of James spake the subsequent position, The Resurrection of the Body.* 12. *Matthew in the last place closed all, And the Life Everlasting, Amen.*

These several Articles do contain what is necessary to be embraced in our Faith, that we may be distinguished from *Heathens*, from *Jews*, from the *Sects* that deny the Trinity, from *Atheists* who reject all Religion.

I pretend not to determine when this *Symbol* was first received, nor on what occasion the several Articles were inserted. Sufficient it is to understand that nothing is contained in

See Kings, critical History of the Creed.

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it contrary to Scripture. Our assent to each of the particulars is requisite for the reason already named.

§. 8. A sound Faith without a good Conscience will not denominate us true Christians. For every Article of our Faith casts a favourable aspect on an Holy Life ; The Directions for which are summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. these Rules are to be offered for our understanding the *Decalogue*.

First, *The Law of God does not only require External Obedience but hath a respect to the inward Temper, and Acts of the Soul.* Two distinct Things these are, for as Man's Soul is not his Body, nor his Body his Soul, so it is possible he may yield an outward Obedience to the command, whilst in his Heart a wretched enmity against Divine Objects remains. Our Lord, in explaining the Law of *Moses*, shews that by the irregularity of our Thoughts we may become guilty in God's Account, *Matt. Chap. 5. &c.* It was the Error of the Formal *Pharisees* to absolve a Man if he minded

minded only the Externals of Religion.

Secondly, *in all the Commandments there is somewhat Forbidden, and somewhat required.*

As when we are required to have none other God before the great God our Maker, which is the sense of the First Commandment, there is something expressly forbid, and that which is required is that we should make choice of God for our God, and worship, and glorify him accordingly.

In the Second Table it is said, *Thou shalt not steal.* This Eighth Commandment expressly forbids Theft, and in it is implied a Precept to promote the Wealth and Prosperity of our Neighbour when opportunity offers.

Thirdly, *in every Command something more is intended than is expressed.* As under the Sixth Commandment, which forbids Murder, all Rashness, Revenge, Rage, &c. is prohibited. And as some Precepts respect Man as a sociable Creature, the Law reaches to all in the society. Children are to honour their Parents, Parents are to educate, and take care of their children. And some Sins are forbidden, in the prohibition of which

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the incentives, occasions, &c. are also to be considered as things that we are obliged to avoid.

Fourthly, *the Ten Commandments being divided into Two Tables, the First containing Four, the Second containing Six Commands: the Precepts of the First Table, which respect God, are superiour to the Commands of the Second Table, which respect our fellow Creatures.* We are bound to honour our Parents, but when we must either sin against God, or loose their Favour, It is our Duty to prefer the Honour of God before the pleasing our Earthly Parents.

We are obliged to mind our secular Employments, but not on the Lord's Day, which is to be kept Holy, that is, peculiarly to be set apart for Religious Duties. Yet the Command of keeping the Sabbath, yields to works of Mercy, such as preserving our own, and the Lives of others, nay to the care that Men are to take of Beasts, for so much time is to be spared as that they may not starve, whilst we keep a Sabbath.

Fifthly, *some Precepts are called affirmative, in which what we are to perform*

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form is prescribed, against which by Sins of omission Men offend. Others are Negative, which shew what we are to avoid, and Men offend against them by Sins of Commission.

Negative Precepts bind at all times, for we may never do what is forbidden ; whereas such things as are required as Duties never cease to be such, yet we are not always to be in their Exercise.

As giving Alms to the Poor, and hearing the Word of God, both are Duties, but we are not always, without intermission, to be in the exercise of either ; it being impracticable.

We have not every moment a sight of the necessitous, nor opportunity of hearing. Besides one Duty is not to overthrow another.

Sixthly, *Love is the Fountain from whence all Obedience is to flow, and the end of our observing the Commands.*

Love to God is to animate our Obedience to the First Table, and love to our Neighbour is to enliven our conformity to the second Table Precepts. This is the fulfilling the Command

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Command. These Two, love God, and love thy Neighbour, are the great Precepts which are in the Divine Law, according to what our Lord declares, *Matt. 22. 37 &c.*

These Things being promised we are to observe these following Rules to govern and judge of our selves in the obedience we perform.

First, *the whole Law is to be obeyed intirely.*

Not only are we to yield an outward Obedience, but inward, and the observing one Command does not excuse us from regarding the other. Our honesty in our Traffick, or industry in our particular calling is not to be a pretence for not worshipping of God, either in praying, or receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Nor our being careful not to take God's Name in vain an excuse for injustice, or Lying.

To the Integrity of our Obedience we are to add perpetuity, for the Law is a perpetual Rule of Living.

Secondly, *as the Commands are not all alike as to necessity, so the Sins which Men contract the guilt of are not alike heinous*

heinous. The least Sin deserves death, but some Sins are, on the Account of aggravating circumstances, more displeasing, and expose Men to a greater vengeance than others. To sin thro' inadvertence exposes to condemnation, but to sin knowingly, presumptuously, renders a Man in a more fearful manner obnoxious to Divine Indignation : Nor may we pretend that Christ hath abrogated the Law since he makes known the contrary. *Matth. 5. 18. 19:* The Moral Law remains an invariable Rule of Life, tho' we cannot merit Life by our imperfect Obedience.

Satisfaction and Merit (saith a Learned Man) belong wholly to Christ ; but our Obedience becomes necessary and

Lukin Introduc. to Script. ch. 8. §. 3.

indispensible from the nature of God; and our relation to him as we are Creatures. Our Obligation to Obedience is so far from being dissolved, by what Christ hath done for us, that it is much more confirmed thereby.

Holiness is the way which they who are redeemed are to take in order to enjoy Eternal Life, and they who do not endeavour to regulate themselves accordingly

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ingly cannot enjoy any Evidence of their being justified by Christ's Righteousness imputed.

§. 9. Prayer to God is an essential Duty and Privilege of a Christian. The Things for which we may supplicate the favour of God, are briefly mentioned in the Lords Prayer. It is requisite that we should understand the Will of God in this matter. God hath in Scripture given us Promises, in diverse kinds, which are to be considered, in order to our being directed how to regulate our Addresses.

The great Promise is pardoning Mercy, but we are to observe how it is made. It is for Christ's sake to them who believe, and repent, and when we beg for the favour we must regard the manner in which it may be expected. We have Promises referring to our Preservation from the Snares of the World, from the Temptations of the Devil, we are to take care that we do not run into the Snares, and into the way of Temptation, which we pray against. We may pray for Prosperity in our undertakings, but then they must
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be lawful. We may pray for Life, and Health, but are not foolishly to take courses that may shorten the one, and destroy the other. It is our duty to pray that the Word of God may be of advantage to us, but then we must hear, and regard what we hear, if we expect a gracious answer. The great Blessing of Eternal Happiness is made known in the Everlasting Gospel, We are to regulate all our other Desires, so as to bring them into a subserviency to our enjoying an accomplishment of that which is of the greatest moment.

§. 10. The Sacraments of the New Testament are to be considered by us, and our Obedience to Jesus Christ to be shewn, by partaking of them, according to the command of the Gospel. These are the Seals of the Everlasting Covenant.

Baptism is the First of these, it signifies to us, our Union with Christ, and our Obligation to be his Servants. Whoever knowingly, (not having in his Infancy been baptized) lives in contempt of it, is unworthy to be called a Christian.

The

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The Lord's Supper is also to be observed.

It is a Memorial of Christ's death, and a Seal of our Pardon : And on our part a renewal of our Engagements to be his Servants. The Almighty does at his Table treat us as his adopted, and we are obliged, with becoming preparation, renewed Repentance for past Sins, and serious Resolutions by divine assistance, to be careful of Religion in our Retirements, and Justice, Truth, and Equity in our Conversation, to approach to this venerable Ordinance. Thus believing what are the Articles of our Christian Faith, walking in a course of Obedience to the Divine Law, praying to God, observing the Institutions of our blessed Redeemer, our having the Bible will be so far from being an aggravation of our Ruine at last (which it will prove to some) as that we shall have just reason to look on it as the most valuable Treasure, and among the principal Blessings which God bestowes.

C H A P. IV.

Directions for the Profitable reading the Scriptures. Reading to be accompanied with Hearing. And with Prayer. With a Serious Design of Practising our Duty. With a diligent attention. With Faith, and Application to our selves.

WHen a Nobleman of *Aethiopia* was read- *Acts 8.*
ing the Fifty-Third Chap-
ter of *Isaiah*, he confessed himself to be
at a loss, not apprehending what that
Paragraph intended.

I doubt not but that many, who have
Wisdom to prefer the Truths of the
Bible before the glittering Enjoyments
of Humane Life, do make alike ac-
knowledgement. It is with an intenti-
on of serving them that the following
Counsels are offered.

§. 1. *The*

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§. 1, *The hearing of the Word preached is to accompany the reading of it, that it may be the more profitable..*

I believe very few, or none who neglect to hear make Conscience of reading the Oracles of Heaven, in their retirements: Both in their Places are to be regarded. God hath usually honoured the Preaching of the Word to be an efficacious means to convince Men of Sin, to perswade them to Faith, and Repentance. If any alledge they do know as much as a Minister can inform them, their opinion of themselves is not to be regarded, but it rather may be replied, for this reason they should hear, that they may discover Truth from Error, since they must necessarily judge themselves more capable of so doing than others, who are less wise in their own conceits. Did I think such Men of Understanding would take the pains to read so much, I would venture to add another *Argument* for their hearing of the Word preached (*viz.*) that so others, who have not arrived to the very height of knowledge, may by their Examples be encouraged to attend where they may receive

Instructions necessary to their Eternal Blessedness.

My design is to do good to them who have a less opinion of themselves, and consequently whose Benefit is more likely to be procured, To such then I recommend diligent hearing of Sermons. The explicatory part of a Sermon (that is worthy that name) gives oftentimes an insight into a considerable part of a Chapter.

Sometimes the Scope, or occasion of a dark passage of Scripture are advantageously represented, from whence they who have not leisure to turn over large commentaries may receive considerable Profit. The observation is worthy to be remembered, that the private Duties of Religion, such as Prayer, and reading of the Scripture, do fit us for more Publick Service of God ; And the hearing the Word in Publick does tend to keep up the vigour of Religion on our Spirits in our retirements.

A Lord's Day becomingly observed tends to the support of Religion, thro' the several Passages of the ensuing Week; and to intermix serious Thoughts with secular Affairs is the way to have profitable

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table Sabbaths. The Duties of Religion cast a favourable aspect on each other. Whosoever makes conscience of hearing, as well as reading, will by his own experience be able to bear Witness to the usefulness of what is now recommended.

§. 2. *Prayer to God for Heavenly Wisdom is also to be considered as necessary for reading the Scripture with advantage.*

It is not enough for us to say that Humane Helps, without the assistance of Divine Grace, are sufficient for our understanding the Bible. They are not to be neglected, upon a vain imaginary expectation of immediate Illuminations, nor are they to be trusted to without invoking the benediction of that God who is the Father of Lights, and who alone can reach us to profit.

That God can give us more Knowledge of Divine Things than what we have at present is certain; and as he requires us to read and search the Scriptures, so it's our Wisdom to implore his Blessing upon us that our Understandings may be enlarged, and that we may have more full discoveries of what is written in our Bibles.

For besides the understanding the literal sense of the Scriptures, a spiritual Knowledge is necessary to our consolation, and growth in Holiness.

A Man may understand the *Grammatical* Sense of a Proposition in *Euclids Elements*, but not perceive the several intermediate *Ideas*, of which the demonstration doth consist, and so remain ignorant of it's *Mathematical* Sense.

In like manner he may read the Bible, and perceive the coherence of one Proposition, with another, without being endowed with a Spiritual perception of the Articles of Religion.

This Spiritual Understanding results from a comparing our own Frame, and Temper with what we read, to the attainment of which the Grace of God is necessary: Which Grace we ought to beg, and consequently Humble Prayer is to accompany our reading of the Scripture.

§. 3. *A Serious design of practising what we shall understand to be our Duty is to be considered, as requisite to a profitable reading the Scriptures.*

Men read the Scriptures partly out of custom, partly that they may not be
utter

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utter Strangers to the Religion they profess. Nor are they to be discouraged from so doing, but further to be advised to do it with a design of becoming more holy, and to promote a regularity of Heart, and Conversation.

To sin against Knowledge is a sad method to provoke God to leave us to a Spirit of Error, and Giddyness.

To omit Duties that we perceive are commanded, or to commit Sins which we know to be such, will render our State more deplorable, at the Day of Judgment, than theirs who never had a Bible to instruct them in the Doctrines of *Salvation, of Faith and Sanctity.*

§. 4. In our reading let us attend to what we read with diligence.

Reading of Scripture out of custom does sometimes render Men unattentive to what they read, and that intercepts their profiting.

A perfunctory discharge of the Duties of Religion is too often the fault of them whose Consciences will not suffer them to be at quiet if they should totally omit them: From thence proceeds their hastiness in surveying the Holy Scriptures, their hurry when on their knees, and a
fatal

fatal Stop to their advancement in Christianity. We should consider the part of the Bible we read, whether it be an History, a Propheſie, or a doctrinal Diſcourſe, and regard the ſeveral particulars of it, and ſee what things may be deduced from it to our benefit.

§. 5. *Believe what we read.* This is of higheſt Importance, for he who believes not the Scripture to be the Word of God, will receive little advantage by his reading. And as this general propoſition is to be received as Truth, *the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, are the Word of God, or of Divine Original,* ſo we ſhould conſider of it whiſt we are reading. The realizing this Truth will tend to our making a becoming improvement of what we read, whether it be a Doctrin to be believed, a Duty to be performed, a threatning againſt Sin, or a Promise to Obedience.

Finally apply what we read to our ſelves, ſee how it affects us and what the Duty is which God requires of us in particular. Endeavour to underſtand what Promiſes belong to us that we may be encouraged in our Chriſtian Courſe towards Heaven; And to diſcern what Precepts ſuit us in
our

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our present circumstances. God doth, in what is written in the Bible, direct himself to us in particular, offering his Mercy, displaying his Threatnings to us, as if our Names were inserted in the Holy Oracles.

He who thus conscientiously searches into the Scriptures, will find that no Knowledge is comparable to an understanding of his Bible. Nothing will give greater consolation in a dying hour than the Thoughts of Life spent in the service of God, which the Holy Bible directs unto. The remembrance of the delightful Passages of the Scriptures will refresh the Mind in the Agonies of Death, and be an happy mean to give a triumphant Passage into Eternity. Blessed are they who read the Bible, and understand what they read, and take the measures prescribed for their reconciliation with God, and for their conduct in this World.

Should it be proclaimed to Men that the ever blessed God had ordered a Book to be compiled, and that but one Copy of it was to be seen, which might be viewed by all who would undertake a long Pilgrimage to satisfy their curiosity, how many would be at the pains, to travel

travel far, that they might have a view of so valuable a Volume? Let not the commonness of the Mercy render it mean in your Eyes; But with a thankful temper of Spirit read this Book, some part of it, every day, and when finished renew your reading; for be assured if, following these Counsels, you read it ever so often, fresh delight will arise, new things will offer themselves to your Thoughts, and you will at last count that time best spent which you allotted to this, or the like holy Imployment.

*Tibi Domine
Et a Te.*

To find *Errata* in Printed Books is so common, that it's no longer a reproach. Should the Reader forbear perusing a Treatise until one came to him without Mistakes, he would be involved in a misery which the *Italians* deeply relent. *viz.* *A Waiting for them that will never come.* To prevent his disappointment the following Table of *Errata* is offered to his Notice with an acknowledgement of Faults to be Corrected.

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